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SPIRITUALISM AND  
PSYCHICAL RESEARCH



# SPIRITUALISM AND PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

By

J. ARTHUR HILL

AUTHOR OF "PSYCHICAL INVESTIGATIONS," "SPIRITUALISM,  
ITS HISTORY, PHENOMENA, AND DOCTRINE," ETC.



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“ Read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, . . . but to weigh and consider.”

BACON’s *Essays* : “ Of Studies.”

“ We are so far from knowing all the agents of nature and their various modes of action, that it would not be philosophical to deny any phenomena merely because in the actual state of our knowledge they are inexplicable. This only we ought to do : in proportion to the difficulty there seems to be in admitting them should be the scrupulous attention we bestow on their examination.”

LAPLACE : *Analytic Theory of Probabilities.*



## PREFACE TO NEW EDITION

I HAVE revised and as far as possible have brought up to date the material of this volume, but space has forbidden extension. Accordingly I mention here the following recently published books :—

- (1) *On the Threshold of the Unseen*, by Sir William Barrett, F.R.S. (Kegan Paul).
  - (2) *The Reality of Psychic Phenomena*, by W. J. Crawford, D.Sc. (Watkins).
  - (3) *Raymond : Or Life and Death*, by Sir Oliver Lodge, F.R.S. (Methuen).
  - (4) *Psychical Investigations*, by J. Arthur Hill (Cassells).
  - (5) *Spiritualism : Its History, Phenomena, and Doctrine*, by J. Arthur Hill (Cassells).
- (1) Contains evidential ouija messages which support theory of survival and communication.
  - (2) Best experiments yet conducted on raps and levitations without contact.
  - (3) Survival evidence mostly through mediumistic trance.
  - (4) Survival evidence by normal clairvoyance.
  - (5) Fuller treatment of the whole subject, with

answers to the criticisms of Mr. Edward Clodd and others.

My own conclusions remain essentially as presented in the present volume, but I should now express myself more positively. My investigations have confirmed my earlier opinions as to the reality of survival and of communication by clairvoyance or trance ; while as to physical phenomena, concerning which I had doubts, the investigations of Dr. Crawford have shaken and almost upset my scepticism. I believe that most or all of the phenomena called spiritualistic do really occur, and that the spiritualistic explanation of them is reasonable. But I maintain that the phenomena should be studied in a calm and scientific manner, with the aim of linking them up with the general body of scientific knowledge. They should not be sought as a kind of uncanny diversion, and they should be left alone altogether by those who cannot bring a critical judgment to the subject.

J. ARTHUR HILL.

BRAFORD.

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# SPIRITUALISM AND PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY.

A CERTAIN cynical philosopher, asked by a rather irresolute lover for his advice about getting married, replied : " Whichever you do, you will repent it." Yet the poor fellow was forced to do either the one or the other. To marry or not to marry. There are only two horns to the dilemma.

It is somewhat thus with anyone who writes on a very controversial subject. He is almost forced to take sides, for he has his own opinions ; yet, whichever side he takes, he will probably more or less repent it, for he will often wonder whether, after all, he is on the right side, and whether he has been quite fair to his opponents. There is much to be said on all sides. The more we know, the less ready we are to judge. Nothing is altogether good or true, nothing is altogether bad or false. The world is a mixture.

I feel this very strongly about spiritualism ; and I wish to make my own position quite clear, from the outset. I am not a spiritualist, but I know many estimable people who are ; and indeed I share their beliefs to some extent, being quite convinced that things do really happen which orthodox science cannot explain, and which certainly seem to point to the continued activity of minds no longer functioning through their old fleshly body. Consequently I am no materialist, and my spiritualist friends cannot understand why I decline to " go the whole hog " and accept their label. Well, it is partly because I think there is so much ignorant credulity among the ranks of spiritualists that I have a strong repugnance to the idea of even seeming to make common cause with them ; partly also because—as it happens—I have little or no wish for personal survival of death or "immortality," and am therefore always more or less hoping that some explanation will be devised whereby the phenomena which now point to survival will be made to point in some other direction.

In short, I attempt the difficult feat of avoiding both horns of the dilemma. I am neither spiritualist nor anti-spiritualist. I am a member of the Society for Psychical Research, which investigates these things in a careful scientific way, and I am always glad to be informed of any experiences which come within the range of our studies. I keep an open mind. But the subject is so comparatively new, and is so

beset with difficulties—which, by the way, the beginner usually does not see and can only gradually perceive as he progresses—that I am sure it is much too early to come to any definite conclusions. Therefore I content myself with studying the evidence, and applying thereto certain “working hypotheses” which can be modified or replaced by better ones if further facts should require it. I say frankly that I include survival of personality, and possible communications from surviving minds, among those working hypotheses; not because I want to, but because I cannot honestly avoid it. For, as it seems to me, there is no other hypothesis that even comes near being reasonable and scientific, with regard to some of the phenomena which my friends and I—apart from the mass of evidence printed in the *Proceedings* of the Society for Psychical Research—have witnessed and recorded. I do not ask anyone to accept my hypotheses. It is for each one to formulate his own. I ask only that those who are interested shall suspend judgment until they have studied both sides and, if possible, have obtained a little first-hand experience. I may say also that I prefer people to err on the side of scepticism rather than on the side of belief. We want no return of witch-manias. We want cool, balanced judgment, with earnest desire for the truth, and plenty of patience in the seeking of it. “What mankind at large most lacks,” says the late Professor William James, “is criticism and caution, not faith.”

The various present attitudes towards our subject may be indicated as follows :—

(1) The spiritualist regards certain phenomena as proving the continued existence, and activity in mundane affairs, of deceased human beings. He believes, chiefly on the basis of "communications" by trance or automatic writing (Moses' *Spirit Teachings* and Stead's *After Death* are the best, but the literature is enormous), that the after-death conditions are very like the present ones. It is a step up into one of the higher classes of the school, that is all. Our state there will depend on how we have used our opportunities here. Of course we shall not have the same sort of body, but the dropping of the physical envelope is no proof that the real ego has gone out of existence. We cannot see spirits —most of us—but they are not thereby disproved. Water and steam are the same things essentially, but one you can see and the other you cannot. The electricity in a wire is often the important thing about that wire, is indeed its *raison d'être*. But you cannot see it. Perhaps our spirits are similarly the important things: the seen things are temporal, the unseen things eternal.

As to whether we go on for ever "being ourselves" but growing as we progress through the various planes, or whether we are "absorbed," the spiritualist wisely does not bother much. It is enough for him to have satisfied himself of the next stage; when he gets there, he can proceed to

further inquiries. Meanwhile he contents himself with just a glance at this question, affirming a mystical philosophy, but not blinking its difficulties. "We hold (provisionally, at least) by the idea of the essential unity of the individual spirit with that Universal Spirit which is without beginning or end, but has an infinite variety of modes and grades of expression. We have never been able to think of the human spirit as something entirely separate, discrete, independent. This, of course, brings in other problems turning on the nature of individuality and selfhood—the problem of the 'I' which is never merged into any other 'I.' " \*

There is no "authoritative" body of doctrine, but the foregoing may perhaps be taken as the attitude of the best class of spiritualists. There can be no question that the belief is capable of supplying religious sustenance and moral stimulus. It postulates a God for worship; as practically all other forms of religion do, and it teaches that as we sow, so shall we also reap. Further, in its belief in the "great cloud of witnesses" about us it has a moral lever of immense power. If we believe that a loved father or mother is watching us and wishing well for us, we shall fear to do or think anything that will wound that pure and loving soul. It seems certain that the Japanese cult of spirits, which has points of close similarity to Western spiritualism, has had a great part in strengthening the

\* *Light*, May 17, 1913 : editorial columns.

moral fibre and raising the ideals of that remarkable people.

I have described spiritualism at its best. There are debased forms, but so there are in other religions. We should judge each at its best. Christianity should not be taken as expressed in the religion of a superstitious Russian peasant, but as presented by the most cultivated and good-hearted of its adherents. So with spiritualism. We should take a Stainton Moses, a W. T. Stead, or an Alfred Russel Wallace, as its exponents.

(2) At the other extreme of opinion we find Roman Catholicism condemning spiritualism and all its works. Father Bernard Vaughan, for instance, accepts as genuine the alleged phenomena or some of them, but attributes them to the Devil or his subordinates. There is a certain logicality about this view, if the main Catholic position is conceded. If the only way of salvation is the way of the Catholic obedience and communion, it follows that every other way is wrong, and that what seems good outside the Catholic pale, is a false show, a delusion, a will-o'-the-wisp. However good, therefore, the moral and spiritual influence of spiritualism may seem to be, it is fundamentally evil. But this follows only if we concede the Catholic claim to be the only way of salvation, and this no non-Catholic will do. So the Catholic attack on spiritualism avails little.

(3) The Anglican communion is in a more half-way

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position, as might be expected from its wider tolerance. The more ignorant of its adherents still cry "Devil" when psychical phenomena are mentioned, but in more cultivated quarters there is interest and inquiry and provisional friendliness. Whatever he may think about this or that phenomenon, it is clear that the present Bishop of London (Dr. Winnington-Ingram) is a good spiritualist in his philosophy. He does not believe that at death a man is immediately turned into a glorified saint. He thinks he continues to be pretty much the same :

" Is there anything definite about death in the Bible ? I believe there is. I think if you follow me, you will find . . . things revealed to us about life after death . . . the man is the same man . . . exactly the same five minutes after death as five minutes before, except having gone through one more experience in life . . . the character grows after death ; there is progress . . . a third thing is, we have memory . . . memory for places and people . . . and with memory there well be recognition : We shall know one another . . . we shall still take great interest in the world we have left." \*

The Bishop supports his belief by texts from the Bible. But texts of quite opposite character could also be found therein, if we wished to support the contrary opinion. The spiritualist seems in a stronger position, logically. He says his belief is based on facts, on things which happen amongst us at this present time.

(4) The other chief attitudes towards spiritualism are those of the psychical researcher, and, finally,

\* A Saturday-afternoon sermon at St. Lawrence, Jewry.  
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the disbeliever of the Professor Münsterberg type. The former is interested in investigation of the alleged phenomena, but does not base his religion on them ; the latter says that it is all bunkum, and the phenomena do not happen as alleged. "The facts as they are claimed do not exist, and never will exist, and no debate makes the situation better." \*

But it is a dangerous thing to dictate to great Nature as to what she cannot do. The experts jeered at Stephenson's absurd idea of running carriages on rails at the frightful speed of thirty miles an hour, and even Sir Humphry Davy attributed lunacy to the man who proposed to light London by the patently absurd method of sending gas through tubes into the houses. Examples could be multiplied. The lesson of history is : Never deny the *possibility* of any alleged event. Disbelieve it by all means, if the evidence is not convincing ; but do not deny its possibility. .

The success of spiritualism, and indeed of any form of religion which gives prominence to the doctrine of a future life, depends largely on the general state of opinion and sentiment regarding such future life. It is a doctrine of Christianity that we survive death, but it is certain that many good Christians have not only very hazy notions but also no particularly keen desires in the matter. The affairs of the present life are so multitudinous and absorbing, that little room is left for thinking

\* Münsterberg, *Psychology and Life*, p. 253.

about the next one. And as people get on in years, they often reach a sort of mellow, half-tired state, in which they lose the desire for personal survival. Milton's Belial wanted to go on living, though in hell, suffering being more tolerable to him than the idea of annihilation.\* But not many people feel like that, surely—not many, at least, who know what suffering is.

Some years ago it seemed psychologically desirable to test public feeling on this point. Dr. F. C. S. Schiller, of Oxford, suggested to the Society for Psychical Research that a systematic inquiry should be made, and the task was undertaken by the American branch. Ten thousand people were sent a list of questions about their feelings with regard to survival, and three thousand replies were received. The result was rather astonishing. A large proportion of the people did not seem to care—over sixty per cent.—and there was reason to believe that some of those who said they did were influenced by the idea that it would be very shocking to say they did not, and therefore answered from convention rather than from feeling. The total results certainly indicated a widespread indifference.† And this indifference is not to be hastily condemned. We could not do our work here, if we were greatly

\* *Paradise Lost*, book ii., line 146.

† Full discussion of the answers, with copy of the questions, in my *Religion and Modern Psychology* (Rider, London), chap. vii. See also *Proceedings*, Society for Psychical Research, vol. xviii., p. 416 and foll.

preoccupied with the after-life. Also there is a sort of selfishness in a hankering after personal survival ; and a lack of faith, as if we thought the Universe could not look after its own affairs (immeasurably greater than ours) without our petty assistance. A certain indifference, then, is not altogether undesirable. But if it became quite general, it would probably extinguish spiritualism and psychical research, for people would lose their interest in the inquiry. To a great extent, psychical research is an investigation of human faculty all round, with a view to truer notions of human personality, rather than an attempt to prove survival ; but it is probable that most members of the society have the smaller and nearer question more at heart than the larger and more philosophic one.

The course of spiritualism, then, will depend largely on popular desire, and this is influenced by many factors which cannot be summed up or predicted.

## CHAPTER II.

### HISTORY OF SPIRITUALISM.

SPIRITUALISM is no new thing. Belief in the continued existence of the dead, and in the possibility of communicating with them, has probably been almost universal among mankind. It seems most likely to have arisen through dreams ; for the primitive savage, dreaming of some dead friend or enemy as still active and alive, would explain the phenomenon most easily by taking it at its face value and believing that somehow or other the dead person was still alive somewhere. How else could he appear and talk and hunt and strike ? Also it must be remembered that in primitive man the difference between the sleeping and the waking life was much less marked than it is now. And even now, in some people, the two occasionally get confused. Vivid dreamers are sometimes uncertain whether an incident really happened, or whether they only dreamt it. There must have been a period in the early history of man when he did not differentiate at all. His sleep experiences would then be as real to him as the waking ones.

Later on, such experiences seem to have been deliberately produced, perhaps by hypnotic means. There is reason to suppose that the Eleusinian and other mysteries were concerned with something of the nature of hypnotic or mediumistic practices. Initiation conferred the knowledge of immortality ; and from the serious and weighty statements of such writers as Plato and Plutarch, it is evident that something very impressive took place at the ceremonies, though exactly what it was we do not know. Among the Jews also, of five hundred years earlier, something in the nature of oracles or necromancy was widely prevalent, before Saul began the rooting-out process, though evidently believing in the reality of the wizards' powers, as is shown by his consultation of the medium who lived at Endor (1 Sam. xxviii.). The same kind of thing occurred, or was believed to occur, in the Roman world, for, in the last century before Christ, a number of the greatest personages of Rome were subjected to police supervision on account of their alleged practice of summoning into visible presence the spirits of the dead.\* And in such works as Tylor's *Primitive Culture* may be found evidence of beliefs and practices of this sort all over the world, in addition to accounts of spontaneous happenings such as apparitions, haunts, and the like.

These things are common in China, for instance, at the present day, particularly among the Taoists.

\* F. W. H. Myers' *Classical Essays*, p. 207.

A friend of mine who is a missionary in North-west China, near the Tibetan frontier, tells me that he has been present at Taoist ceremonies in which a trance-speaker purported to be controlled by a spirit, and he is inclined to think that sometimes there is evidence of supernormal knowledge. The Chinese also use a kind of planchette, to which they resort as a means of reading the future. The performance is a professional one, being carried through publicly before some altar in a temple, and payment is made to the priests. "The question is written down on a piece of paper, which is burnt at the altar apparently before anyone could gather knowledge of its contents, and the answer from the god is forthwith traced on a tray of sand, word by word, each word being obliterated to make room for the next, by two men, supposed to be ignorant of the question, who hold the ends of a V-shaped instrument, from the point of which a little wooden pencil projects at right angles." \* Chinese literature shows that these practices are at least many centuries old.

Modern spiritualism in the West is usually looked on as dating from 1847. In December of that year mysterious rappings broke out in the house of John D. Fox, a Methodist living at Hydesville, New York State. The family consisted of himself, his wife, and two daughters aged fifteen and twelve respectively. A code of signals was arranged, and the "spirit" gave the information that he had been a

\* *The Civilisation of China*, by Herbert A. Giles, p. 67.

pedlar, that his age was thirty-one, that he had left a family of three girls and two boys, and that he had been murdered for his money. The occurrences becoming widely known, hundreds of people flocked to hear and see ; with the result that rappings of similar kind began in other families, and the infection spread like wild-fire through the eastern States. Much controversy raged round the whole thing for many years. Suspicion fell on the two Fox girls, one of whom indeed confessed that their rappings were produced by cracking the knee and toe-joints. The other confessed later on, but recanted her confession. On the whole, it seems impossible to come to any safe conclusion ; the confessions are supported by the testimony of three Buffalo doctors, who found that no raps were forthcoming when the girls' knees were held ; but, on the other hand, the later investigations of Sir William Crookes with D. D. Home, and of Sir Oliver Lodge with Eusapia Palladino, go far to indicate that raps are really producible by some peculiarly-endowed people, in a supernormal way. It is therefore unwise to adopt any dogmatic explanation. I know a man—of apparently normal build—who can produce excellent raps, corresponding in sound to the average description of the Fox rappings, by means of some bone or other in his shoulder. He knows nothing of spiritualism, and he used to rap for fun, to amuse himself and friends—of whom I was one—at times of special tedium, as for instance, in church.

His abilities in this line have the effect of making me perhaps unduly distrustful of alleged supernormal knockings, when there is anybody present who can reasonably be suspected of trickery. But I admit that I know of one case which impressed me. A friend of mine was once very badly scared by loud knockings in the wall—an outer wall, near no other buildings—at 9 P.M. on a June evening. No one was visible outside, though the light was good. No cause was found indoors. The thing was so terrifying that the hearer developed brain-fever. And it turned out that her favourite brother had been accidentally killed, twenty minutes before the knockings began.\*

Therefore I suspend judgment, awaiting more evidence. And the same remark applies to all the other physical phenomena—alleged movement of material objects without discoverable cause, production of things from nowhere or elsewhere (*apports*), whether birds, flowers, coins, or what not, and “materialisations.” The evidence for these things does not convince me. They are mostly produced in “dark sittings,” under conditions prescribed by the medium. This is altogether objectionable. It puts a premium on fraud. Not long ago three materialising mediums were caught tricking, in quick succession. False beards, muslin, and other

\* Details in my *New Evidences in Psychical Research*, p. 120 and foll. There is a good case made out for mediumistic raps in Dr. J. Maxwell's *Metapsychical Phenomena*.

paraphernalia were found concealed in a specially-made and ingenious receptacle in a stuffed chair-back. Since then, there has been rather a slump in materialisations. The best modern evidence for physical phenomena—chiefly movements of untouched tables and stools—is the long report of the Committee which had eleven sittings with Eusapia Palladino in Naples in 1908. The three investigators are probably the best qualified trio now living, for these inquiries. Two are expert conjurers, and all are old hands at showing up fraudulent mediums. Yet, though they went as sceptics, they came back believers : believers, that is, to the extent of admitting that some unknown force was at work, though of course this does not involve any necessary belief in a spirit-cause of the phenomena. The report is impressive, if not conclusive. Personally, I feel that no report of such phenomena ever can be conclusive. I can always imagine that the investigators were somehow duped.\*

To turn now from the “physical” phenomena to the more properly psychical, we find a gradual development with its beginnings much further back. Mesmer and Swedenborg are the two great names. Friedrich Anton Mesmer (1734–1815), a Viennese doctor who practised his new methods in Paris, had considerable success in curing diseases, and instilled his doctrines into the minds of many enthusiastic

\* *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xxiii., p. 306 and foll.

disciples. Among them, the Marquis de Puységur was particularly successful ; finding also that, in hypnotic trance, the patient could often diagnose his own ailment and could prescribe for himself, with remarkable skill. The ideas spread to the United States, and, particularly in the eighteen-thirties, a wave of mesmerism swept over the eastern States. Itinerant mesmerists gave performances and treatments in every town. And it was found that a subject in trance could often diagnose and prescribe for some other patient. One of the most famous of these subjects was Andrew Jackson Davis, who afterwards wrote the inspirational *Harmonial Philosophy*. From this it was but a step to the claim that the prescribing intelligences were deceased medical men ; and as a matter of fact one of Davis's spirit monitors purported to be Galen himself.

Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), after more than fifty years of a scientific career which included the holding of various important Government posts, began to have illuminations and revelations. He saw and conversed with innumerable exalted personages, saints and philosophers, kings and popes, Calvin, Luther, Cicero, Moses, Paul, and John. Also he received much of what is now called automatic writing. His hand would be impelled to write—by spirits, as he thought—without conscious volition ; and the matter written was not consciously composed. Of course we know now that the subliminal levels of the automatist's own mind are competent to

produce a great deal of this kind of thing, and that there is no need to invoke spirits as explanation—certainly not unless the written matter contains specific and true details which the automatist never knew. However, the modern doctrine of the “subliminal” was as yet below the horizon, and automatists naturally attributed the product to an external agency. Swedenborg did not encourage others to seek communications, believing himself to be a specially chosen vessel, whose revelations were to be accepted on his authority ; \* but his example no doubt set many other people experimenting, and his teaching was largely concerned with the spiritual world and its occupations.

These various factors, combined perhaps with the unsettled and revolutionary atmosphere of the times—French Revolution, Fourrieristic and other Socialisms, decay in the Church, from which arose, in England, Wesley’s great revival—all these, together, helped the spiritualistic movement. From the States there came missionaries of the new beliefs—most important, the medium D. D. Home, who arrived in England in 1855. He travelled extensively on the Continent, giving séances before the Emperor and Empress of the French, and the Tsar of Russia. He never accepted fees in money, though no doubt he received valuable presents. Nor was

\* “ My state is so ordered by the Lord that I can be possessed by spirits without injury. Others so possessed become *non compos* : I remain altogether in my right mind.”—White’s *Emanuel Swedenborg*, p. 174.

he ever detected in trickery. It is only fair to say that Browning, in his poem *Sludge the Medium*, which was aimed at Home, unfortunately allowed himself to be influenced by his own prejudices rather than by the evidence. He afterwards admitted to F. W. H. Myers that he had never caught Home cheating, and that the only evidence he could show in support of his opinion was based upon a second-hand rumour that Home was once found experimenting with phosphorus, somewhere in Italy.\* The most dubious part of Home's history is that which concerns Mrs. Lyon, a wealthy widow who presented him with £24,000, and adopted him. Repenting her benevolence, she alleged undue influence, asserting that Home had said the spirits suggested her action. The case was tried, and Mrs. Lyon obtained restitution; but the judge made it clear that not much reliance could be placed on the lady's evidence, and nothing was really proved against Home's integrity.

His powers were varied. He saw "spirit forms" of the deceased friends and relatives of his sitters, and obtained names and evidential messages. Many distinguished persons testified to this, including the Earl of Dunraven, Dr. Garth Wilkinson, and Dr. Gully, father of a late Speaker of the House of Commons. Also very fine addresses or sermons, purporting to be from spirits, were given in the

\* Podmore's *Modern Spiritualism*, vol. ii., p. 230, and *Journal S.P.R.*, July 1889.

trance state. But Home's real speciality was in the "physical phenomena" line. In his presence, tables lifted themselves up in the air without being touched, chairs moved about, stools galloped and waltzed, flowers came out of vases and distributed themselves. And it so happens that some of the evidence for these marvels is extremely strong and not to be lightly put aside; for one of the sitters, who investigated Home very carefully and wrote a lengthy account of the phenomena, was a Fellow of the Royal Society, and was to become one of the world's most famous scientists. No one who knows Sir William Crookes' record in chemical discovery—his caution combined with outstanding genius—can read his account of these sittings without being impressed. Of course it is not necessary to suppose that spirits were the cause, even if the phenomena did happen in some supernormal way. The important thing to note is, that in Sir William's opinion the phenomena, whatever the cause, did really happen, and that they could not be explained by orthodox science. This was as far as he would commit himself.\*

Home died in 1866, aged fifty-three. He was twice married, first to a Russian lady of noble family and some fortune, later on to another lady of the same nationality and similarly blessed with this world's goods. For the last thirty years of his life he was a Roman Catholic.

\* *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. vi., p. 98.

Next in importance, in the history of the growth of spiritualism, comes the Rev. W. Stainton Moses. His career is even more puzzling than that of Home. Born in 1839, the son of the headmaster of Donington Grammar School (Lincolnshire), he had a successful school career at Bedford Grammar School. He graduated at Oxford in 1860, was ordained, and from 1863 to 1870 he acted as curate in the Isle of Man and the West of England. An affection of the throat compelled a change, and he became private tutor to the son of Dr. and Mrs. Stanhope Speer, who were friends of his. Afterwards, for seventeen years, he was English master at University College School. In 1872 he had read an American spiritualistic book (Dale Owen's *Debatable Land*), and had been much impressed. He visited various mediums, including Home, and had several evidential experiences. Then his own mediumship developed, first for physical phenomena, then for automatic writing. He took a large part in founding the British National Association of Spiritualists, was on the council of the Society for Psychical Research until his resignation in 1886 on account of his dissatisfaction with the Society's cautious and, as he thought, too antagonistic attitude towards certain mediums, and was President of the London Spiritualist Alliance from 1884 until his death in 1892. He also acted for many years as editor of *Light*.

Mr. Moses, like Home, was not a professional medium. Indeed, he was on a higher level than

Home, for he did not even indirectly live by the exercise of his psychic powers. He did not seek publicity ; sat only with his own friends, notably Dr. and Mrs. Speer, whose written accounts are very impressive ; lived a retired, honourable life, greatly respected by all who knew him. No suspicion of fraud can reasonably be entertained concerning Stainton Moses. There was never any ground for suspicion, and his life seems to have been good in every way. The only difficulty is that the phenomena are almost incredible. Perhaps future investigation will render them more credible, by familiarising us with similar happenings.

After Mr. Moses' death, *Light* was edited by E. Dawson Rogers, who died in 1910, and later by E. W. Wallis. It is now ably carried on by Mr. David Gow, who well sustains its high standard. In wide outlook, geniality, and general high-mindedness, the editorial tone of this paper sets an example which the organs of many other sects which condemn spiritualism would do well to emulate.

It is impossible to estimate accurately the numerical strength of the spiritualistic body. It certainly is considerable. About three hundred societies exist in Great Britain, holding Sunday and other services, with hymns, an address, and "clairvoyant" tests by some medium who sees and describes the spirit forms of deceased people, presumably relatives or friends of someone present. Sometimes these descriptions reach an evidential level, particularly

when the name of the "spirit" is obtained, with an appropriate message. I know one medium who is successful in this kind of thing to an extent which quite rules out chance coincidence or fraud. I do not mean that a spiritualistic explanation is necessitated ; the "forms" and the correct messages may be telepathic ; but I am sure, from the results obtained in a long series of private sittings with this medium, that we are here dealing with a form of perception which is neither understood nor indeed recognised by orthodox science.\*

The meetings of the various spiritualistic societies do not seem to attract a particularly high type of person, and in provincial meetings there is rather a "crank" atmosphere. However, they apparently minister to the needs of a certain class, and probably that class is no lower—it may indeed be higher—than the average level of the other sects or of the Anglican and Roman communities. Some of the stronger spiritualist societies have their own Sunday Schools for the children, and many prominent spiritualists are zealous in the cause of social reform, thus continuing the tradition—for spiritualism has always been intensely democratic, and was closely associated in its early days with social enthusiasms of the Brook Farm type and its congeners.

This book being for English-speaking readers, I have said little about the movement in other countries. It became—and remains—fairly strong in France,

\* See my *Psychical Investigations* (Cassells).  
(2,047)

with one peculiarity, that spiritualism there is reincarnationist, whereas in the States and in Britain it is not. This is due to the teachings of an early writer, Allan Kardec, who believed in reincarnation and apparently persuaded the spirits to believe in it also. So we find the French spirits—or, to be exact, the *soi-disant* spirits communicating through French mediums—teaching reincarnation, while the English ones mostly deny it. This is one of the humorous features of the situation, and constitutes, I think, a rather strong argument against the reality of both lots of “spirits.” It certainly suggests the greater likelihood of a subliminal explanation of the whole thing being nearer the truth than a spiritistic one.

In Germany the cause has flourished less vigorously, though in the days of Zöllner's and Weber's sittings with Slade there was considerable activity of the kind. Nowadays, however, theosophy seems to have rather ousted spiritualism among those who want what the Scottish sergeant called “fancy religions”; and Dr. Rudolf Steiner is chief oracle or high priest.

In Italy there has been a great deal of psychical investigation, chiefly of the “physical phenomena” kind, in consequence of the performances of the Neapolitan medium Eusapia Palladino, who convinced many famous scientific men, such as Lombroso, Morselli, Richet, and—in England—Sir Oliver Lodge, of the genuineness of her phenomena,

whatever the explanation. There is an excellent spiritualistic periodical published monthly in Milan, called *Luce e Ombra*.

As to other countries, there is a considerable body of spiritualists in Argentina, and a smaller one in Spain, apparently at Barcelona mostly ; and scattered societies exist in Norway, Holland, Denmark, and Russia. But the chief success of the movement has been in English-speaking countries and in France. Colonially it is strongest at Melbourne, where the *Harbinger of Light* is the chief press organ.

The teaching of modern spiritualism is, in brief, that human beings survive death, that the after-death life is very like the present one as regards occupations and interests, and that our condition there will depend on how far we have used our opportunities here. This is philosophically sound, and morally helpful. If we are to form any clear idea of a future life, we must conceive of it in terms of the only life we know—viz. the present one. The conception may turn out inadequate and inexact, but it is the best we can do. And as to the moral helpfulness, there is no doubt about the tonic qualities of a belief that as we sow, so shall we also reap. Moreover, there is the “great cloud of witnesses” ; spirits around, watching our endeavours and our failures. Like the Utopians, spiritualists believe that the dead are present among us, though to the dull and feeble eyesight of mortal men they

be invisible. For “it were a point of great unkindness in them to have utterly cast away the desire of visiting and seeing their friends, to whom they were in their lifetime joined by mutual love and amity, which in good men after their death they count to be rather increased than diminished. They believe, therefore, that the dead be presently conversant among the quick, as beholders and witnesses of all their words and deeds. Therefore they go more courageously to their business as having a trust and affiance in such overseers. And this same belief of the present conversation of their forefathers and ancestors among them feareth them from all secret dishonesty.” \*

No doubt that will be the tendency, even if we doubt the complete attainment of Utopian perfection.

\* More's *Utopia*, book ii.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH.

IN consequence of the activities of D. D. Home, Stainton Moses, and other mediums, plus the influence of the various periodicals and books issued from the press, the belief in the reality and, further, the spiritual causation of the phenomena in question became extremely widespread in England, and was held by many persons eminent in science, literature, and other fields. Indeed it became a scandal to science, as Professor Sidgwick emphatically said, that phenomena vouchéd for by so many able and morally reliable people should remain neither established nor disproved. It was felt, therefore, that some scientific society ought to be created for the purpose of investigating these things. Professor (now Sir William) Barrett, Professor Sidgwick, Mr. F. W. H. Myers, and Mr. Edmund Gurney, with the co-operation of Stainton Moses and other spiritualists (who afterwards withdrew because of their dissent from the leaders' sceptical attitude and drastic methods) met together and founded the Society for

Psychical Research in 1882. Investigations were carried on in thought-transference, hypnotism, the physical phenomena of spiritualism, automatic writing and speaking, clairvoyance, and the like. The results are embodied in thirty volumes of *Proceedings* and eighteen volumes of the *Journal*. Among the Presidents have been Mr. A. J. Balfour, Mr. G. W. Balfour, Professor Henri Bergson, Sir William Barrett, Bishop Boyd Carpenter (formerly of the See of Ripon), Sir William Crookes, Professor William James, Mr. Andrew Lang, Sir Oliver Lodge, Mr. F. W. H. Myers, Professor and Mrs. Sidgwick ; and the membership list includes most of the famous names in science and philosophy throughout the world.

The Society has no creed. Each member has his own, from the better-class spiritualist who perhaps still believes too much, to the sceptical Dr. Bramwell (for instance), who disbelieves in most things, including telepathy, but is a member because of his interest in hypnotism. However, speaking tentatively, it may be said without fear of serious contradiction that the Society, though standing primarily for investigation and not for conclusions, does in fact represent, through the majority of its members, a belief in the reality of thought-transference or telepathy ; and a certain proportion of its most able leaders are now prepared to go further, and to say that some of the phenomena furnish sufficient basis for a reasonable belief in the existence and

agency of disembodied minds. To a great extent this has been brought about by the famous American medium, Mrs. Piper, who has been continuously investigated by the Society for nearly thirty years.

Mrs. Piper is a trance-medium. That is, she goes into a trance or sleep-like state, and either speaks or writes in that condition, the communicating entity purporting to be some deceased human being who is temporarily able to use Mrs. Piper's tongue or hand. In short, it is a sort of "possession." And it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that at least some form of supernormal agency is operative, for knowledge is shown far beyond what Mrs. Piper herself possesses. For example, in the early days of her trance, an intelligence purporting to be George Pelham, a lawyer (known during life to Dr. Richard Hodgson, the Society's American secretary and investigator), purported to communicate. Dr. Hodgson held a long series of sittings, in which he introduced 120 different sitters, twenty-nine of whom had been known to Pelham in life. All were introduced under false names. Yet the communicating spirit picked out Pelham's friends, addressing each by his name, correctly, and with the appropriate degree of intimacy—"Mr." to an acquaintance, "Jim" to an old chum—and never claiming to know any of the other ninety-one whom he had not known in life.

In one case out of the twenty-nine, a rather interesting thing happened. The spirit failed to recognise

the sitter (a young lady) at first, though she had known Pelham in life. But, as it turned out, it was as a young girl that he had known her, and the sitting took place eight years later, and five years after his death. Naturally she had grown up and greatly altered in the interim, and his failure to recognise her was not surprising. On being reminded, however, by Dr. Hodgson saying, "Do you remember Mrs. Warner ?" (mother of the sitter, and friend of G. P.) the spirit immediately wrote "Are you her little daughter ? Ask her if she remembers the book I gave her to read," and made other appropriate remarks about old times with Mrs. Warner and her relatives and friends.\*

This incident is curious and significant ; for if the explanation had been telepathy (thought-transference) from the sitter's mind to the medium's, the latter ought to have got the sitter's name as easily as in the case of the other twenty-eight. Indeed, if telepathy were the explanation, the same thing ought to have occurred with all the hundred and twenty. How, on the telepathic theory, did the medium's secondary personality (masquerading as G. P.) know who were G. P.'s friends and who were not ? It is also necessary to remark that G. P. was not of Mrs. Piper's circle of friends or acquaintances, and had only met her once, for a few minutes. There is no reason to suppose that she had any normal knowledge as to who were his friends.

\* *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xiii., p. 324.

At the beginning of his investigation's, Dr. Hodgson was sceptical. In fact, he began with the definite idea of finding out the trick. But the facts beat him ; for evidential matter was still forthcoming when he introduced complete strangers, under false names, and even—in one instance—masked. At last, after several years of laborious investigation, which included the shadowing of Mrs. Piper by detectives, with a view to ascertaining all possible sources of her normal information, Dr. Hodgson was driven to the conclusion that no normal explanation would cover the facts, and indeed that a spiritistic explanation was the only satisfactory one. He did not become a spiritualist, for he still disbelieved in genuine "physical phenomena," such as the raising of tables without contact, materialisation, and the like ; and in fact he disbelieved, for the most part, all other investigators' results, and all other mediums' performances. But he was satisfied about the genuineness and supernormality of the phenomena of Mrs. Piper.\*

Another important sensitive (for she was not a paid medium) was Mrs. Thompson. This lady gave sittings to various friends, and to others introduced by them, including Sir William Crookes, Sir Oliver Lodge, Professor Sidgwick, and Mr. Myers. Some of her results were astonishingly good. In one instance a spirit purporting to be a Mrs. B. mentioned

\* Mrs. Piper's trances have now ceased, but she occasionally gets a little automatic writing.

many details of her earth life, all correct, and none of them known to Mrs. Thompson, so far as could be ascertained. One detail turned out interesting in a particular way. The spirit Mrs. B. referred to a recipe for "pomatum" which she had copied into her recipe book. On inquiry, her daughters said they knew of the recipe book, but not of any recipe for pomatum, which was, however, the word used by their mother for pomade. The book was hunted up, and no such recipe was mentioned in the index. But on further examination an entry was found, evidently made a few days before Mrs. B.'s death, and not yet indexed, stating the composition of Dr. Somebody's pomade.\*

The incident is important because it seems to exclude telepathy. No living mind knew of the fact, so far as can be ascertained. The only mind that did know was that of the dead lady who claimed to be communicating. This is the sort of trivial detail that makes the best evidence. It is sometimes said by objectors that the spirits ought to be occupied with higher things—ought to give us sublime revelations, if they communicate at all. But if they did we could not "check" them. As a matter of fact, the regular "controls" of mediums are usually ready enough to spout long sermons and addresses of a religious character, or descriptions of the after-death state. But the psychical researcher discourages eloquence of this kind, and asks for verifiable facts,

\* *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xvii., p. 183.

however trivial. Religious exhortation is not evidence. We want facts which the medium could not know.

Some curious incidents of this kind happened in the scripts of Mrs. Holland, a lady living in India. She had long possessed the faculty of automatic writing, but had not cultivated it, her family being hostile to the subject. After the death of F. W. H. Myers, whom she had not known personally, she read his *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death* and was keenly interested. Soon afterwards a Myers spirit turned up in her automatic script, and requested her to write to "Mrs. Verrall, 5 Selwyn Gardens, Cambridge," also referring to 1 Corinthians xvi. 13 ("Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong"), and saying, "I am unable to make your hand form Greek characters and so I cannot give the text as I wish."\* Mrs. Holland had seen Mrs. Verrall's name in *Human Personality*, but did not know her address, nor whether Selwyn Gardens was a real place or not. As it happens, "5 Selwyn Gardens, Cambridge," was Mrs. Verrall's correct address. And the text referred to is inscribed—omitting the last two words—over the gateway of Selwyn College, which would be passed in going from Mr. Myers' house to Mrs. Verrall's. The road in which Mrs. Verrall lived is named after the college, and there is a mistake in the inscription (the omission of a mute letter) on which Mr. Myers had more than once re-

\* *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xxi., p. 234.

marked to Mrs. Verrall. The text, therefore, was likely to be associated with Mrs. Verrall in Mr. Myers' mind, in a twofold way, and it is noteworthy that it turns up again in Mrs. Holland's script later on, again in connection with Mrs. Verrall, and before Mrs. Holland had been told anything about the significance of its previous appearance. Mrs. Holland had never been in Cambridge, and had few acquaintances connected with it. She knew nothing of the Selwyn College gateway text.

The incident certainly suggests a real Myers communicating, though it cannot be held to prove it.

In another and earlier case, Dr. Hodgson had asked one of Mrs. Piper's spirits to show himself to Miss Verrall, holding a spear in his hand. The control misunderstood, and asked "Why a sphere?" The mistake was put right, and the control agreed to try. A week afterwards, at the next sitting, the control claimed to have been successful in showing himself to Miss Verrall, with a "sphear"—so spelt in the trance-writing. As a matter of fact this had not happened; but it is curious that in Mrs. Verrall's script, produced three days after the beginning of the experiment, the Greek *sphairas* (sphere) appeared, with the Latin words *volatile ferrum*, which Virgil uses for a *spear*. Mrs. and Miss Verrall were in England, and knew nothing of the experiment which Dr. Hodgson was trying in America.

It would therefore seem that the Piper "spirit," whatever it may be, had somehow got his message

through, though to Mrs. Verrall instead of her daughter. The reproduced confusion between *spear* and *sphere* seems to put the case outside the probability of chance coincidence ; and in this connection it is important to note that no allusion to a spear had occurred in Mrs. Verrall's previous writings, and that only once had there been any mention of a sphere, in an early and unintelligible piece of script.\*

The most prominent line of recent evidence is that of the "cross-correspondences." Some time after the death of Dr. Sidgwick and Mr. Myers (in 1900 and 1901), and increasingly after the death of Dr. Hodgson in 1906, it was found that messages were coming through various non-professional mediums in a mosaic sort of fashion, each bit unintelligible in itself but making sense when fitted into the other bits by the S.P.R. officer who received all the scripts. The initiative seemed to be on the other side. Myers and Sidgwick, in life, had often discussed the idea of getting the *same* message through two different mediums, and had experimented to some extent in that direction ; but these mutually supporting communications were an elaboration which apparently no one had thought of. They are very involved, and it is impossible to condense the best of them, for everything depends on full detail. But the following examples of some of the simpler cases will serve as illustrations.†

\* *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xx., p. 213.

† Full accounts in *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vols. xx. to xxv.

On February 12, 1907, a control purporting to be Dr. Richard Hodgson communicated by automatic writing through Mrs. Piper in trance, stating that he had said "Arrow" to Mrs. Verrall. It was afterwards found that Mrs. Verrall (who wrote automatically but not in trance) had produced, on Feb. 11, script containing a drawing of three converging arrows; and on Feb. 18—of course without having heard anything about what had been said through Mrs. Piper—she automatically wrote a number of words beginning with AR—"architectonic, architrave, arch." This last word was repeated three times, with a sketch of a pointed arch which is very like an arrow-head. And in the automatic script of Miss Helen de G. Verrall, who, like her mother, has psychic faculties, there appeared on Feb. 17 a drawing of an arrow, with the words "many together," suggesting the three converging arrows of Mrs. Verrall's script of the 11th.\*

In March 1906, Mrs. Verrall produced scripts containing such phrases as "first among his peers" (*primus inter pares*, a term applied to the Pope). "Pagan and Pope. The stoic persecutor and the Christian. Gregory not Basil's friend ought to be a clue, but you have it not quite right. Pagan and Pope and Reformer;" also a sentence from the inclusive. Selections in Sir Oliver Lodge's *Survival of Man*, F. Podmore's *Naturalisation of the Supernatural* and *The Newer Spiritualism*, H. A. Dallas' *Mors Janua Vitæ*, and the present writer's *New Evidences in Psychical Research*.

\* *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xxii., p. 77.

*Aeneid*, ii. "Not with such help will you find what you want; not with such help, nor with those defenders of yours." Further, "The cross has a meaning. The standard-bearer is the link."

Mrs. Verrall recognised the *Aeneid* passage referring to the vain defence of Troy against the Greeks, but saw no connection between this and the other passages in the script. Dr. Verrall, however, was reminded by both of them of the picture by Raphael in the Vatican, of Attila terrified by the vision of St. Peter and St. Paul when meeting Pope Leo, who went out to save Rome. There is a cross-bearer on the Pope's left, and a standard-bearer in the background. Dr. Verrall did not tell his wife that the scripts reminded him of the picture, nor did they recall it to Mrs. Verrall's mind. Indeed the script itself said that its statements were unintelligible in themselves, but would be explained by what would come through another automatist.

In Mrs. Holland's script of March 7 the key was given: "Ave, Roma Immortalis" (Hail, immortal Rome). "How could I make it any clearer without giving her the clue?" \*

There are other supporting details in the above case, which I omit for brevity's sake. It is important to remember that both automatists were ladies of position, not professional mediums or spiritualists. They were separated by a great distance, and neither

\* *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xxi., p. 297.

of them knew of the other's script until some time after its production.

These messages purported to come from the late F. W. H. Myers or his group. Rome was specially associated with Mr. Myers, for he died there. Of course Mrs. Verrall and Mrs. Holland were aware of that fact, but the selection of a Rome incident is at least noteworthy.

It is unfortunate that any summary of or selection from these cross-correspondence cases must inevitably give an inadequate representation. Evidence of this kind is cumulative ; and though one or two isolated cases may be explicable by chance coincidence, this is not so with a large mass. Personally, I do not think that these cross-correspondences, every one of which I have carefully analysed, amount to *proof* of disembodied minds, or even of anything supernormal at all. But I think they strongly suggest both ; and I am inclined to agree with those others who have given most careful study to the phenomena —*e.g.*, Sir Oliver Lodge, Mr. J. G. Piddington, and Miss Alice Johnson, the Society's Research Officer—that it is justifiable to adopt, at least as a working hypothesis, the supposition that disembodied minds are really to some extent concerned, and that they are those of human beings who not long ago moved about among us in bodies of like nature with our own. In some of the Piper communications an amount of classical knowledge is shown far beyond what Mrs. Piper normally possesses. This knowledge is of a

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kind which strongly suggests the mind of F. W. H. Myers, but it cannot be conclusive, on account of the possibility of telepathy from some living mind—and of course there are many which contain the required amount of knowledge.

## CHAPTER IV.

### AUTOMATIC WRITING : CASE OF MISS CURTIS.

BUT it must not be supposed, from what has been said, that all automatic script is evidential. The thing is much more complex than that. A large proportion of the automatic script or speech that is produced does not concern itself with proving survival or the identity of the communicator. In spiritualistic meetings a medium will give a fluent and eloquent trance address on religion or philosophy, and the intelligence usually claims to be a spirit. But there is no proof. Similar eloquence has been produced by hypnotising a good subject and telling him he was W. E. Gladstone. So with automatic writing ; a great deal of it is eloquent but non-evidential, being in the nature of religious exhortation or description of the conditions on "the other side." Stainton Moses' *Spirit Teachings* and W. T. Stead's *After Death* are two of the best examples. More recently the books of Mr. L. V. H. Witley (*Love from Beyond the Veil*, &c.) are fairly typical. They serve to console and help a certain kind of mind in bereave-

ment or other trouble, but they do not supply any sort of proof that the messages really come from beyond the veil.

I would not willingly remove any prop which supports a human soul in trouble. Indeed I would recommend the books just mentioned to any one whom I thought they would cheer. When there is no certainty either way, it is wise to do what promises best in its effects. And I think it may be good for many people to believe in the spirit-origin of these books, though I myself do not. By this I only mean that I suspend judgment. I do not *deny* anything.

On the other hand, there are automatic writings which are definitely misleading, either by prophecies that do not come off, or by gulling the automatist into the belief that he or she is specially chosen as the prophet of a new and great revelation to mankind. I know several unpublished dramatic cases in which the writing claims to come from various apostles, and even from Jesus himself. The automatists are non-spiritualists, well-educated, and rather orthodox in religion. Knowing nothing of the vagaries of the subliminal self, they accept the writing at its own valuation, and regard themselves as the favourites of Heaven: Such acceptance is evil in its results. The judgment becomes paralysed, the will is given up, and there is danger of serious mental disturbance. I have known cases of this kind, and have several under observation at present. I have toiled through great masses of manuscript written by these

“high spirits,” and it is mostly a weak sermonising which would not do credit to an average Wesleyan local preacher or Salvation Army lassie ; but the automatist is often so dazzled by its alleged authorship, that it is regarded with an awe and reverence which would be comic if it were not pathetic and indeed tragic. These cases occur, of course, in spiritualistic circles also. Sometimes the spirits have no particular revelation to make, but just drop in, so to speak, for a chat, in a companionable sort of way. Mr. John Lobb receives and records messages from Shakespeare, Carlyle, and Dickens, whose vapid twaddle suggests sad deterioration since their death ;\* while Mr. James Robertson—a leader of Glasgow spiritualism—converses with Joseph Priestley, J. S. Mill, and Harriet Martineau,† accepting the controls at their face value with an innocence and unquestioning receptivity which would rejoice the heart of a proselytising priest, but which—one might think—would be doubtfully pleasing to the logical spirit of the returning John Stuart Mill. Swedenborg is another regular correspondent, turning up in scripts and trance-utterances on the smallest provocation ; and, among unpublished examples, I have seen poetry from Shelley, Browning, Tennyson, and Mrs. Hemans (*Qu'allait-elle faire dans cette galère ?*), with remarks from Kepler about Halley’s comet, and

\* *Talks with the Dead*, pp. 41, 42, 44, 52.

† *Spiritualism : The Open Door to the Unseen Universe*, pp. 30, 50.

spirit drawings from Turner, assisted by John Ruskin !

The automatist who believes in his own " spirits " is often contemptuous or hostile to other automatists' productions. I once happened to refer—while speaking to an automatist whose script I had been examining—to some " messages " received by another automatic writer purporting to come from the Angel Gabriel. This was immediately stigmatised as " nauseating." I mentioned Stead's *After Death (Letters from Julia)*, and was told that the book was " simply foolish." Yet the matter received by the person to whom I was speaking was of entirely non-evidential kind, purporting certainly to be from non-human and apparently angelic sources, but containing nothing particularly grand—nothing, I am sure, beyond the powers of the automatist's own mind. I think that if Mr. Stead had been of a different complexion politically, his psychical product might have found more favour in the eyes of this particular person ; but, even apart from political and personal animosities, there is a strong tendency among automatists to decry the productions of others. Either the spirits are a very intolerant lot, or—ruling out spirits and adopting the other theory—the subliminal is, like the Devil, an egotist.

As illustrations of misleading messages, I append two narratives. Miss Curtis is a friend of mine, and a woman of great intelligence and capacity ; a Church-woman, not interested in fancy religions or crank

systems. At the time of the experience she was head of a large school. She was introduced to the subject by a friend, as the opening paragraph indicates. I quote her own words. In all the following cases the names given are pseudonyms.

*Copy of Message received by an Automatist Friend of mine,  
June 1909. Myself present.*

" We are very pleased to greet your friend, and to see the keen interest she has developed in this branch of human relationship—for all are branches of one great tree that has its roots far back in the dim ages of history. We would like to say a great deal to her, but must limit our words, and be content with little just now. First of all we can promise her, that if she will follow along the lines she has laid down for herself, *i.e.* keeping an open mind on all questions, and one receptive to truth wherever it may come from, her progress will be rapid, and she will be amply repaid. . . . She is surrounded by a band of bright helpers, who are her constant companions—who gain help from the conditions she gives them for their work for others, as well as give help to her. She has strong guides, who have been with her from infancy and will never leave her until she steps upon this shore—and she has before her a path of increasing brightness that will open out in new and wonderful ways, that will bring satisfaction to her soul. Let us have the opportunity of giving her yet other words, for she gives us power, and we can give her help and encouragement. Much light there is round her.

" We hope your friend will enter into communication herself."

This message was obtained by my friend from one who has often communicated with her, and who calls herself a guide. It was my first experience of automatic writing, though of

course I had read on the subject. During the whole of the message my hand was on my friend's wrist, and she said that I gave her great power. At the end of the meeting I took the pencil, but found I was unable to write, though I can hardly be surprised, as I only attempted it for a few moments, and was scarcely in good condition, I imagine. I made no other effort until the following year, when a friend having related her experiences, I decided I would see if I had any power. The first time was not a suitable one as regards conditions, but the instant I tried seriously I found my pencil began to move and form words. The following is the first message I received. Brackets enclose my mentally-put questions.

My name is Verttyg.

(Are you one of my guides ?)

Yes.

(Are you English ?)

No.

(What nationality are you ?)

Norwegian.

(When did you pass over ?)

Ninety-nine years ago.

(Are you a man or a woman ?)

Man.

(What was your vocation ?)

Musician.

(How many guides have I ?)

Numbers.

(Are they all mén ?)

Yes.

(Shall I be able to communicate with other guides ?)

Yes.

I now began to write more easily, and received several messages, all with one exception purporting to come from this Norwegian Verttyg. They were mostly of no particular interest, but one of them touched on a very private matter,

giving some extremely sound advice, and this I imagine made me place more reliance on what followed.

May 8, 1910.

My name is Verttyg. What do you wish to hear to-day ?  
(Of the spirit-world, please. Can you tell me about the life after death ?)

Yes, we can tell you about this life, now that you think there is a spirit-world to know about, and try to realise that you are one day to think this thought thoroughly true. This is a world that you will enter this year.

(This was such a shock to me that I asked, Is it Verttyg who is writing ? The answer came immediately.)

Yes. This is a world that you will enter when you are not very far through your earthly life, for you are no . . .

(Here I broke off in an agony of fear, and said I had always understood that spirits had no right to give information on such subjects.)

Yes, we have a right to tell you this, for you try to take the thought bravely, and you can bear it, if it is right for you to know, because God has given you strength to bear it.

(You wrote "this year." Is this really true ?)

Yes, this year will not end without your being taken away from your friends to this land of peace, and then you will understand that there is the thought of much that is helpful in writing to you thus.

You will try to think of all we have told you, and will help your family to try and think about it too, for God wishes them to know the truth of all we have told you this time.

(Must I tell them that I am going to die this year ?)

Yes, for God wishes it. You must not take it so to heart, for God wants you here to work for him, and will help you to think differently to what you do now.

(Here I asked about some people who were looking to me for help.)

They will miss you terribly, and they will never forget the help you have given them, for they are thinking of you this time, though they do not know the trouble you are in, for they

love you so much that they know when things go badly with you.

(You would not use the expression "go badly," would you ?)

No, we do not, for we know the truth, and know that you are really entering the life eternal, and though you are not ready to write thus [here the writing became very rapid] we have tried to make it easy for you, so that you may have peace and comfort to-day, and we will help you to take this trouble well and bravely, and help you to write well too, for we know how difficult it is to believe that everything is for the best in this world. . . . You have tried so hard to think bravely of this, and God is pleased with you, and will help you more than we can, for he is the power of all. You must not write any more now, for you are much too tired, and we may not stay to tell you more. You may be quite sure that we shall be with you, and that God will help you to bear this news with hope and power. . . . •

Verttyg not Monterrison.

[Verttyg always ended like this, and maintained that Monterrison, who tried to communicate once, was an evil spirit.]

Several other messages of similar tenor were received during following days. • They repeated and emphasized the prediction of my imminent death, and cheered me up with religious exhortations of very impressive character. On May 11 my spiritualistic friend came over, and was horror-struck to find that I firmly believed in the messages, for she was absolutely convinced they were false. She went home and received the following from her friends on the other side :

" We are convinced your friend is being misled. She is not in communication with her own guides. Let her cease writing. We advise her strongly to turn her mind away from the whole subject for awhile. She will have light shed on her path before long, which will make the reason of this matter clear. You need have no fear for her, she has strong

guides of her own, who will take good care of her. And the time will come when they will make themselves known to her, but this is a necessary preparation. You must remember it is by bitter sorrow oft-times that lessons are learnt, and we can only say that all inquirors after spiritual truth have at some time to face these dangers—and we would add, they will never be left without warning or advice. . . .

"There is a strange admixture of truth and falsehood in the communications first received when the operator's or rather the medium's hand is not under proper control, and the impressions received and transmitted come from diverse sources. Let your friend divest herself of any idea of truth in the message which has been given her. We are convinced it is false."

*Extract from a Message received through the Same  
Friend, later on.*

"We see your friend herself very clearly—more clearly than some of her surroundings on this side, but we do see a very steady and strong aura, which gives no sign of any passing out of earthly conditions, and we can enter into her surroundings to some extent, enough to be able to gauge the amount of psychic development she has reached. She has great power in that direction, which it would be of great help and benefit to herself and others to develop to a much larger extent than at present. . . . In this matter it is better to go slowly and surely, and where there is not a superabundance of physical health it is better to use psychic faculty very sparingly. . . . We know that there must be some preliminary communication between you on earth and those in this sphere, before any individual soul can come into direct communication with those who are its true guides, and spiritual directors. Happy are those who are not dismayed by those whom one may call interlopers on the spirit side, but press on to what lies beyond. . . ."

(Can you assign any reason for the message being given?)

"We cannot assign the motive in this particular case.

Sometimes it is evil, sometimes it is a mistaken idea on the part of the communicating spirit, and very often it is from pure love of fooling people. Your friend's powers will not cease through remaining in abeyance for a time . . . and more light will shine on what now seems such a strange and inexplicable tangle. . . . Above all let her put the thought of dying out of her head."

*Notes made by N.C., January 1911.*

Now that the message has proved false, I should like to add a few notes to the preceding communications before time dims my impressions. For three days and nights, in my ignorance and inexperience, I was certain—without the shadow of a doubt—that I had received my death-sentence. The shock just at first was appalling, and the horror of the first night, when I imagined the fulfilment of the message might take place at any moment, I cannot describe; but though I had my bad times afterwards, a most wonderful strength came to me, and I was enabled, by some means quite outside myself, to carry on my work just as usual, and to laugh and joke with the children even during the first few days. Not a soul in the house guessed there was anything wrong, and throughout the time. (Eight months) I was kept calm and collected, and found I could enter into everything that was going on, and after the first shock it was quite easy to keep up and "play the game." The last few days of the year, which I had rather dreaded, were full of peace, and I felt that I was being watched and guarded in a most wonderful way. I slept alone throughout the time, and as a rule was not troubled by sleeplessness.

A curious incident was that towards the latter part of the year an old servant of ours had a very unhappy dream about my being ill and apparently dying. I only heard this through a third person, who of course knew nothing of the message. Perhaps this was telepathic from my mind.

I am glad to be able to say that the heroine of the

foregoing experience is still alive and well. She has occasionally tried automatic writing since, and some deceased relatives purported to communicate ; but they produced no evidential matter, and on one occasion when they tried, they went quite astray. Miss Curtis therefore wisely ceased experimenting.

As to " explanations," there are two principal ones, and the reader may take his choice. (1) The spirits were genuine, but they were either mistaken or deliberately deceitful. (2) The whole affair was the concoction of a subliminal stratum of the automatist's own mind, and was analogous to the baseless fabrics which all of us—more or less—build up in our dreams. For my part, this second theory is the one I adopt, at least provisionally.

These warnings of coming disaster are fairly common. I know a case—too long to give here in full, though I have the narrative in manuscript—in which the automatist was told by the " spirits " to throw up his employment and leave his home in Mexico City, because this latter was going to be destroyed by an earthquake in consequence of its extreme wickedness. He was ordered to go to New York, where he would obtain employment in the newspaper business. Having received more or less evidential messages at times, such as correct diagnosis and prognosis of a relative's illness, the automatist had become convinced of the genuineness of the spirits, and he therefore sold up his effects and cleared out of Mexico with wife and family. A few days after his arrival in New

York the "spirits" informed him that they had purposely fooled him, in order to teach him that spirits had no concern with material things! He was naturally somewhat disgusted; but, on the other hand, he had derived so much benefit from the advice of his "spirits" in other things (he had given up tobacco and alcohol and had resumed the dropped practice of going to church, all at their suggestion) that he did not feel disposed to condemn them utterly. He has now harnessed them to the task of short story writing, and they seem to supply him with plots as R. L. Stevenson's brownies did in his dreams. The prophesied destruction of Mexico was to take place about April 1910.

This reminds me of another catastrophe-prophecy. Quite recently I received a long series of communications from an American automatist (not the hero of the Mexico episode), whose controls included Professor William James, Dr. Richard Hodgson, Professor Lombroso, W. T. Stead, and the late King Edward! These famous entities had a somewhat alarming tale to tell. They informed us that there is going to be some sort of geological upheaval and subsidence on a gigantic scale in Western Europe, and that the British Isles will sink bodily below the level of the sea. The date of this event is fixed at July 1914, or thereabouts; and we are warned to flee while there is yet time. Probably my readers, being—like myself—of an incredulous and stiff-necked generation, will neglect the kindly warning, and will continue to take thought

for the morrow, even for morrows extending beyond July 1914. Perhaps the messages were the result of telepathy from the mind of some Canadian or other emigration agent ! \*

Written in 1913. Happily Britain is still supermarine, but some people would see a gleam of truth in the prediction, for the " upheaval " of the war began at the time named.

## CHAPTER V.

### AUTOMATIC WRITING : CASE OF DR. THORNTON, ETC.

THE following matter consists of selections from the automatic script produced by my friend Dr. Thornton and his daughter—or sometimes with Mrs. Thornton. The psychic power was always on the distaff side, so to speak, for Dr. Thornton himself has no automatic tendencies. But apparently he can serve as carbon to the zinc of his wife or daughter, when working planchette or ouija. I vouch for his seriousness and accuracy so far as ordinary human accuracy can go ; and in support I may add that he has taught science in one of our best schools, is a D.D. of Cambridge, and has written several standard works in theology.

I quote from his own written account, as usual. (In letters mostly, hence the colloquial and sometimes jocular tone.)

As to evidentiality, most of our communications have been of a nature difficult or impossible to verify. Some were predictions, which mostly turned out wrong. A good deal of the matter struck me as most probably subconscious creations of the ego. But at the same time *some* of the communications

I find great difficulty in assigning to this cause. Several matters I am perfectly convinced neither I nor May [daughter] knew anything about at any time. This of course would not necessarily imply "Spirits" at work, but might be explained by telepathy from somewhere. Two or three things I probably can verify. As regards the verses, they were very queer. I am perfectly certain that they are not *my* work, and I don't think they are hers. Their quality I should call rather poor. They were dictated out (on planchette) line by line, and where we misread a word it was immediately after corrected in the next writing. "No, no . . . so and so," &c. The poet "spirit" gave his name as John.

"John who?" I inquired.

"Only John."

Apparently the entity had had a godfather and godmother, but no parents! Later on, however, he remembered that his surname was Santley.

#### Examples :—

The traveller saw as he rose to look  
 The sparkling drops of the rippling brook ;  
 "Why must I work and toil?" said he,  
 "When the sun shines bright and the birds are  
 free?"

An angel was listening and heard his plaint.  
 He went to his Master and made him acquaint.  
 "What, O Lord, shall I tell him, pray?  
 Tell me, O Master, what shall I say?"

• • • • •

Bells are ringing, children singing  
 Loud and clear,  
 Angels hear them, bending near them,  
 Devils fear,  
 Sin surrounding, grief abounding,  
 Can't come near.

• • • • •

Sorrow the lonely sat on her throne.  
 Her court was lighted with jewels rare.  
 Her musick consisted of many a groan,  
 Then woe to the fair ! woe to the fair !

As she watched the crowd on the left and right,  
 She sighed to think that the burden care  
 Must follow mankind in its earthly flight,  
 Then what is the good of being fair ?

As long as the world shall last, I say,  
 Sorrow must sit on her throne and sigh,  
 As long as the earth shall keep her sway,  
 The souls of men shall live and die.

We sought the key of heaven, the golden key of life,  
 For with it one may open the palace of delight ;  
 Then you and I may enter and leave this world of strife ;  
 We sought among the wealthy, but, oh, we could not find  
 The treasure we were seeking, because our eyes are blind.

There seems a dreamy groping after good sense and good expression, amid the bathos and irrelevancy. The following, however, are somewhat fancical :

I saw her in the morning,  
 I spoke to her at noon,  
 I kissed her in the evening  
 Under the harvest moon :  
 We met again one evening  
 The stars were shining bright.  
 I told her that I loved her,  
 Said she, "I do not quite."  
 But woe to me and sorrow !  
 I wished we'd never met :  
 She left me on the morrow,  
 Her face I can't forget.

In the shade of the trees I shall meet her,  
 When the sun has gone down in the west,  
 Ah ! shall I be able to keep her,  
 Or will she be taken to rest ?

On inquiry as to the remainder of the "poem," "John" replied "Wait, have patience." After a pause, he added, "Can't remember more." My wife declares she believes that it is all some philandering reminiscence of *mine*—which suggestion I repudiate.

The other day, however, we got a rather *evidential* sort of thing. You know by name A. B.—[a well-known novelist] who is the son of a neighbour and friend of ours. A. B.—married the daughter of Captain C. Well, the A. B.—s are interested in this sort of thing, and when they were here last Wednesday we had a try. Mrs. B., it turned out, could work ouija most rampageously. Her father, I may add, is—or was—quite sceptical : one of the "all humbug" sort. However, we surprised him a little. Mrs. B. and I were writing, and "Frederick Cartwright" turned up. Captain Cartwright said he was not sure what his grandfather's Christian name was (had forgotten), but it might be Frederick. We tried the following tests of identity, which Capt. C. said no one in the room but himself (not, even the daughter) knew, respecting his deceased grandfather.

(1) Year of death.

(2) Age at death.

(3) Town he died in.

The board swiftly and unhesitatingly gave all three correctly—so he said, and was greatly astonished. I must own I was rather surprised myself.

Another time—with Miss F. and myself—the board was very lively, and a Mr. de S. (uncle of a neighbour of ours, lived near, died last May) professed to turn up. He was in Purgatory, and not comfortable. Said he wanted assistance and could be helped by prayer. (He was very anti-Roman-Catholic in life, I understand.) He also went into some family details about his will. [I omit these : private and not very

evidential.—J. A. H.] Later, my wife and Miss F. tried together, and it would do nothing but record “devil, devil, devil,” much to their disgust. By the way, Miss F. is an ordinary sort of girl, twenty-five years old, Church of England in religion, and I don’t think she has any ideas of intermediate states and prayers for the dead. I should not imagine that the matter about Mr. de S. came out of *her* “subconscious”: more likely mine, if that be the explanation. My mind, though, has never run much that way. I have always been accustomed to neither affirm nor deny the efficacy of prayer for those in an intermediate state. The writing is not what I should *expect* to come out of me, so to speak.

[Dr. Thornton is an Anglican clergyman.—J. A. H.]

The same evening there turned up a Dr. Merrimin, who said he was of Trinity College, Oxford, took degree in 1784, D.D. about 1820. Died about 1834. Now for a curious little bit. It said he “went to Paradise” in 1850.

“Where were you from 1834 to 1850?” I asked.

“In Hades!”

We have never had this word used before. I presume there had been some sort of promotion! Dr. Merrimin said he did not want any special help, and seemed to have nothing particular to say. I have never had any connection with Trinity, Oxford, nor known (I believe) more than one man from there. I will consult a list and see if the facts are correct. [I think they turned out untrue.—J. A. H.]

On another occasion my wife and I tried ouija, both *blind-folded*. My daughter took down the letters as the board pointed to them. This was the result.

“Emily Tomkinson for Tom remember me don’t you remember me servant Birkenhead A. 26.”

“Where did you live?”

“Can’t say, servant in your house help housekeeper.”

“Who was the housekeeper?”

“Pete devil Pete devil wicked old woman. Pete box my ears devil.”

“Where is she now?”

"Don't know."

"How long since you passed over?"

"Fifteen years."

"Where did you come from?"

"Liverpool."

"Where is my father?"

"With us."

"How have you come here?"

"Power given me."

"What time of year were you at my father's house?"

"Hot."

"Summer time?"

"Yes."

"Did Pete behave badly to you?"

"Yes devil fiend take things away."

"Where are you now?"

"Paradise."

"Do you like it?"

"Yes."

"Can I do anything for you?"

"Pray."

"What do you want me to pray for?"

"Go higher."

"Are you 'earthbound'?"

"Yes."

"Have you any message for me?"

"No."

"Will you come again?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Others to see on earth."

"Well, try to come again."

"May come." (Cessation.)

You will note that this young lady is *rather* free with my (abbreviated) Christian name! It was not so in those days, but perhaps they are more democratic over "yonder!" I have no recollection of any servant named Emily Tomkinson

(though I may have forgotten, being mostly away at school), but my father had several housekeepers after my mother died, and one of them was a Mrs. Peet or Peate. She was always very civil to me, but I always thought her a curious-tempered old woman. I know nothing against her, nor did I ever suspect anything. She has been dead many years. My wife of course never saw her, so if it is a case of subconscious mind, it comes from me.

Note that we were blindfolded, M. reading off the messages, and neither of us had the least idea of what was coming till it was all finished and M. showed it me. I have made an exact copy for you.

I must add here the account of a curious thing that happened last Christmas. It rather frightened May. We were writing in the drawing-room, M. sitting near a tall standard brass lamp. We had a "control" who wished to communicate, and I asked his or her name.

"No name," was the answer.

I repeated the question; same answer.

"Nonsense, you must have a name," said I, then, remembering that a previous control had warned me of "evil spirits," and told me that they could be distinguished by their refusal to make a cross if asked (I thought at the time that this was a trifle silly as a test) I said:

"If you won't or can't give a name, make a cross."

Then a curious thing happened. The planchette seemed as if seized with a sudden frenzy; it swept across the board we were writing on, and M. knocked her elbow violently against the lamp-stem. I presumed it was attempting to write "No," from the long, straight mark on the paper. I quietly put it back and said, "Make a cross." It wrote in large (six or eight-inch) letters :

"NO, NO, NO."

"Make a cross or go!" I said.

Thereupon there was written in a firm running hand in large letters :

"Curse you."

No further results followed this. I mention this incident, not as in any sense evidential or (so far as I can see) pointing strongly to any particular thing, but as curious, and I believe quite contrary to anything either of us expected—at the beginning at least. M. was genuinely frightened (she is a sound, wholesome girl, who I believe would face a burglar !) and said she would not sit if there were such things as evil spirits about. I pooh-poohed the idea, but she did not like the phenomenon at all. The *feel* of the planchette was very strange, when it went off the board on to the floor. It really seemed as if some powerful but unseen grasp had torn it away. I was surprised, but it only stimulated my curiosity.

Another thing. A spiritualist here said to me one day, "Don't you find you get a lot of *suicides* turn up to communicate?" It then occurred to me that most of those we got were "spirits" who asserted that they had committed suicide or met with violent deaths of some sort.

I have never tried automatic writing with a free pencil. M. has, once, or perhaps more. On the particular occasion I remember, her hand wrote "Henricus Rex." She gave up the conundrum; but an idea suddenly occurred to me, and I said, "Ask if it is Henry VIII." The answer was "Yes," and some other matter followed, which I believe I did not keep a record of, it being nothing of any moment. I do not see why M.'s mind should revert to that subject. She is not fond of history, and never reads it except as a school-task. Further, I don't think she ever saw or heard of that gentleman under the title of "Henricus Rex." It was a curiously-written signature, quite unlike her usual hand. So I took the trouble to get at a copy of King Henry's autograph, but it did not resemble the script. I believe "he" told us he was in Purgatory!

A good many people I knew in the flesh have professed to visit us, and from one or two we have got curious information regarding "the other side." But to many of my questions I got the answer: "We cannot explain; too long and too

difficult : you will know some day"—which may be true, but is not altogether satisfying. One curious thing is that I never get my mother, and rarely my father. But several controls, when asked to tell us how many people they saw in the room, gave one more than there were. This puzzled me at first, and I asked : "Do you mean including yourself ?" The answer would be "No"—adding on *two* to include the control.

"Who then is the other ?" I asked.

"A lady in black."

"Where is she ?"

"Near (piano or other furniture)."

"Who is she ?"

"Mother."

"Why does she never come to communicate ?"

"Can't."

"Why not ?"

"Not allowed."

The following is one of our most evidential experiences, though perhaps it cannot be made very impressive to outsiders. To me it was very striking because I am so sure that the answers given (to my wife's questions) involved knowledge which I did not possess—and never had possessed. I was operating planchette with May—who was equally unaware of the facts concerning the "communicator"—and my wife, though present, was not in contact with either the planchette or us. I am strongly inclined to believe in at least telepathy from her mind, or perhaps—tentatively and provisionally—in a more or less "face-value" interpretation. The following in an exact copy :

"Anyone present ?" [Our usual start.]

"Henry Baines."

"Who are you ?"

"God's messenger." [He was a missionary.]

(Mrs. T. querying) "Where did you go after I saw you at St. Leonards ?"

"Algeria."

(Mrs. T. querying) "Did you lose your life there?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"Spear, poisoned."

"Have you any message?"

"Watch and pray."

A few other more or less commonplace remarks followed. The curious thing is that neither I nor May had ever seen or heard of the person, who however was an actual man, whom my wife knew before we were married. The statements made are substantially correct, but Mrs. T. does not know what has become of the man. She has not heard of him, or thought of him, for twenty-five years.

The following was also curious:

"Anyone present."

"Bertha Maxwell." [Name unknown to May and self, who were working planchette.]

"Do you know anyone here?"

"Yes, Emily would remember me" [i.e. Mrs. T.]

"Were you a friend of hers?"

"No, servant."

"Are you in the room?"

"Yes."

"Whereabouts?"

"By May."

"Which side?"

"Left."

"Did you ever see me before?"

"No, I don't think so."

"Do you know my name?"

"No."

[Apparent omission here, of the "spirit's" claim to have been servant of Mrs. Haley, Mrs. T.'s mother.]

"Where did Mrs. H. live when you knew her?"

"Kilburn" (hesitatingly).

"What was name of street?" [A test; unknown to me and to May.]

"Will you wait . . . know it now."

"What?"

"Netherwood Street." [Correct.]

"Do you remember how old Emily was when she was there?"

"Four or five years, I think." [About right.]

Communicator went on to say that she died of brain fever in 1876 at Guy's Hospital, and went to Paradise. These are unverifiable, the girl being lost sight of after leaving Mrs. Haley. \* Replying to further requests for information, communicator said that Emily was ill once, as a consequence of being put in a too hot bath, that she (communicator) nursed her, that the doctor's name was John Angus, &c., &c. I may have heard some of these details, but am sure that I had never known them all. Still less had May. Therefore something at least of the nature of telepathy seems probable. The events happened over forty years ago, long before I knew Mrs. Haley or her daughter.

[*Note by J. A. H.*—Perhaps Dr. Thornton does not sufficiently consider the possibilities of subliminal memory. During the twenty odd years of his married life he has no doubt been told, and has forgotten, many little incidents of his wife's early life. There is reason to believe that our minds contain a great many memories which we can no longer recall to consciousness, though it is probably too much to say that the subliminal never forgets. However, I do not dogmatise. Certainly Dr. Thornton is more likely to be right than I am, as to how much he has known. And he has a thoroughly sound judgment, and wide knowledge of the literature of psychical research, so I hesitate even to demur to any opinion he may express. I now resume his narrative.]

All this would shock my scientific friends here. They would detect incipient softening of the brain, or approaching (and too early) senile dementia! But I think you will understand and will exonerate me from these serious charges.

I have two sets of friends. One lot say that the whole thing is fraud and delusion, and, I fear (in their hearts) they put me down as a hopeless crank and faddist. The other lot, who are fully persuaded of the facts, in their own minds, regard me as a pronounced sceptic, a man who won't be convinced. But this is unfair treatment on both sides. I am neither. I believe there are sufficient phenomena to justify investigation and to encourage hopes of success in some way. And I claim a right to do so—*irrisione stultorum immotus*, as Porson would have said! I am neither materialist nor spiritist. The former, however, I think has got the cart in front of the horse; the latter has yet to establish his case. In short, I am a sympathetic inquirer, with no cut-and-dried prejudices in the way of theories or expectations.

This I conceive to be the ideal attitude for those engaged in psychical investigation. The words put by Emerson into the mouth of the Sceptic might fitly serve as our motto. "If there are conflicting evidences, why not state them? If there is not ground for a candid thinker to make up his mind, yea or nay—why not suspend the judgment? I weary of these dogmatisers, I tire of these hacks of routine, who deny the dogmas. I neither affirm nor deny. I stand here to try the case. I am here to consider, *σκέπτειν*, to consider how it is." It is not a popular attitude, for the populace like something definite and startling. The man in the street has no patience with the cautious balancer of evidence. He wants to be getting "further." A

business man who knew of my interest in psychical research, recently wanted to know "just where we have got"—wanted it all boiled down into a sentence. It reminded me somewhat of the question addressed by a lady to an analyst friend of mine : " Oh, Mr. R., *how do you analyse things?*" Mr. R. grimly replied : " We put 'em under the microscope and read off the percentages." I did not venture on satire with my psychically\* inquiring friend—he would have misunderstood. I merely intimated that it was too early to hold opinions, except very provisionally: At which, of course, he sniffed with contemptuous disappointment.

Well, it is one of our crosses. Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.\*

\* Dr. Thornton once had a curious and rather evidential piece of script in which a Flodden Field pikeman turned up and gave information which neither automatist knew, about the battle. I have described the incident in my *New Evidences in Psychical Research*, p. 146.

## CHAPTER VI.

### SOME CASES OF APPARENT TELEPATHY OR CLAIRVOYANCE.

It frequently happens that I receive accounts of curious psychical experiences from people who are aware of my interest in such matters. Some of these cases have a certain amount of evidential weight which, while not perhaps fully convincing, is at least impressive to me ; sometimes because the percipients are my own friends, whose integrity and accuracy I can trust, and sometimes because further correspondence with an unknown narrator has led me to form a high opinion of his reliability. I give the following hitherto unpublished cases out of this collection.

In each instance, my comment will be limited to a remark as to the direction in which, as it seems to me, a solution may most profitably be sought. But I do not present anything in the nature of definite explanation. We know too little about the whole subject for that. We must sit loose to theories, and await more facts.

From this it will be understood that I have made no attempt at definite classification, except in a very broad way. The terms telepathy and clairvoyance are useful, the first as the (real or supposed) fact of communication between living minds through channels other than the known sensory ones, and the second as the (real or supposed) fact of supernormal perception at a distance, without the intervention of another mind. But as a matter of fact the two classes merge into each other so much that the names are not much more than occasionally-handy tickets; moreover, provable clairvoyance is very rare, for the fact perceived must be known to no other mind, if telepathy is to be excluded. And this rarely happens, in spontaneous phenomena. But there is some reason to believe that in certain circumstances a specially endowed person may, e.g., guess the "heads or tails" of a spun coin more times in a series than chance would mathematically account for. The same with cards drawn at random from a pack. If the percipient announces his guess before anyone looks at coin or card, telepathy is excluded, and if there is anything supernormal at all, the name clairvoyance will serve for this mind's-eye sort of vision. But in the following accounts I have not separated the two classes.

#### *Telepathy and Clairvoyance.*

The following account is from a particularly good witness—a lady of scholarly attainments, and wife of

a scientific man who is known to me. She seems to possess that special build of mind or body, whatever it is, which makes a good receiver. I know of several other incidents in her experience, which support this view, but which for various reasons it is not desirable to publish.

I quote her account as written out for me, in her own words.

(1) One day my husband started telling me a story concerning two doctors, without mentioning their names. After one or two sentences I said, "It has come into my mind that you are speaking of Dr. A. and Dr. B." What he had said of Dr. A. would have applied equally well to about three hundred other doctors known to us; of Dr. B. perhaps ten or fifteen. Anyhow, I was right. It *was* Dr. A. and Dr. B.

(2) One day at St. Anne's my two elder girls went alone on the shore—a reputed perfectly safe shore for children—while I went shopping. (Nurse was with the younger ones.) Suddenly I felt frightened about quicksands. I asked the first shopkeeper, and was assured there were none; asked second, same answer; asked third, none ever heard of. Felt so anxious that I gave up the rest of my shopping, and went down to the shore. I was met by two white-faced children, who had sunk up to their knees in some shifting sand. My eldest daughter (now nearly twenty) remembers this as the greatest fright of her life. Of course there was really no danger.

(3) One night I wakened in great horror, having dreamed that a man was chasing our eldest daughter in the back yard. The exact time I do not know, as I did not turn up the light, but after a period the clock struck. Next morning my daughter told me she had had a frightful dream of a man slowly walking after her in the back yard. She could see a light in the dining-room window, and knew (in her dream) that her father and I were at dinner, but was unable to call. When

she woke, she turned up the light and found it was twenty minutes past the hour before the one I heard strike. I think the time was 2.20, and I heard three strike after some time.

[After describing other minor incidents, this informant remarks, with reference to "warnings" such as the children's supposed danger, that she has "never had feelings sufficiently strong to make me change my plans, without finding that there was a reason in someone else's mind."]

The next case seems also fairly likely to be due to telepathy, if chance coincidence is excluded. It is from a clergyman who was present on the occasion. If these cases seem at first sight almost too trivial to record, let us remember the importance of the conclusions to which they—though trivial themselves—undoubtedly point. If telepathy is a true fact in Nature, it is much more extraordinary than the annihilation of the earth would be, by collision with another celestial body. As Mr. A. J. Balfour has remarked,\* the latter event would not violate or modify any established scientific law; while the former is a profound mystery, of which we have no scientific theory at all.

Scene: a house in Sheffield.

Dramatis personæ:

Self.

- A. (a lady of the house, a friend of mine).
- B. (her brother-in-law, also a friend of mine).

\* *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. x., p. 9.

Enter a maid to announce that the telephone bell is ringing. A. goes to the telephone in a remote part of the house where the bell (or speech) is quite inaudible in the room where B. and self remain. B. then says to me : " Do you know C. in Newcastle-on-Tyne ? " (Up to this point there had been no conversation remotely involving C. This latter is a former minister of the church which A. and B. attend, and I am his successor. I know him only slightly.)

A. returns from the telephone, and says to B. and self : " You can't guess who has been talking with me over the telephone." (There was thus no expectation of a conversation with the person concerned.)

B. and self are unable to guess.

A. " Why, it's C. in Newcastle-on-Tyne, and he says " [nothing in particular].

As a matter of fact he had nothing to say, but was merely experimenting with a new instrument.

It is of course impossible to rule out chance coincidence as a possible solution in a case like this. But the odds seem against it. It seems reasonable to suppose that B. received a subconscious impression from A. while the latter was telephoning, and that the impression came to the surface of his mind, prompting the question, " Do you know C. ? " However, this must be regarded as not proven, and the proper attitude is one of suspended judgment.

The next is a small incident in my own experience :

I dreamt that a poached egg was brought to me at some meal, and that a chicken's leg was sticking out of the yolk. The dream then changed, or I awoke ; anyhow, I remember no more. Next day, a boiled

egg was brought me at tea, and the maid remarked that during the previous night she had dreamt that she brought me an egg with a chicken in it. She did not say whether she dreamt of it as boiled—probably she did, for it is a less absurd idea than a *poached* egg with a chicken in it. I ought to have asked her, but unfortunately I omitted to do so.

The coincidence, however, even as far as it went, was curious. My dream was very vivid—an unusual thing with me. I do not remember having any similar dream before or since. And it was rather curious that the girl should mention hers, for I do not remember that she ever told me of any other dream. She mentioned this one apologetically. I do not know the times of the two dreams, so am unable to form any idea as to which of us was sender and which receiver, if we allow that the case was possibly telepathic. It is perhaps worth mentioning that the girl in question has perhaps some vague “mediumistic” disposition, for she is one of the heroines of the “rapping” case described in my *New Evidences in Psychical Research*, p. 121. And I have occasionally been successful as “agent” or sender, in telepathic experiments, so it may be that I was the culprit in this case.

A friend of mine once told me of a somewhat similar incident. She had a long and involved and very specific dream, which she began to describe next morning at breakfast. When she was about half-way through, one of her brothers, who had been show-

ing signs of astonishment, said : "Stop, I'll finish it." And he did. The two had dreamt exactly the same dream. Unfortunately it concerned a private family matter, and I cannot reproduce it here.

It is difficult to reach conclusions as to the "super-normality" of a dream-experience which turns out veridical (truth-telling), because out of the large number of nightly dreams some are sure to hit the target of real fact, just by accident. These of course are remembered, while those which "didn't come true" are forgotten. The sceptic in the temple of Poseidon, when shown the offerings of those who had made vows in danger and been delivered, was asked if he did not now acknowledge the power of the god. He replied "But where are they who made vows and yet perished ?" The man was right ; we must hear both sides. And, as we have no means of knowing how many dreams do *not* reveal truth, nor yet—even if we did—the proportion that would be required to prove that the true ones were not due to chance, it is impossible to reach any sort of mathematical certainty.

Nevertheless there may sometimes be ground enough for a reasonable belief, if not for certainty. It is largely a matter of detail. If the details of the dream are numerous, clearly defined, and turn out accurate, chance may become improbable, particularly if no predisposing cause of the dream is apparent. In the following case this latter requirement is perhaps not fulfilled, for the newspapers had contained

reports and remonstrances for some days : but the experient assures us that she knew nothing of it.

I fell asleep between six and half-past in the morning, and in my dream saw a man in a neat foreign military uniform, shortish and thick-set, his coat buttoned tightly, making little wrinkles across his back, and blindfolded. There were other soldiers, and suddenly I heard a shot. Immediately the blindfolded man gave a groan, and fell, not quickly, but his knees giving first, his shoulders and arms falling forward, and his head anyhow—all limp. Then there was commotion, and other people, and I knew he had been shot for some offence, but my great grief was that it was all unjust and undeserved. I awoke in real distress and told my husband, and then at breakfast forgot all about it. During the next few days I found from bits here and there in the newspapers that a soldier, Señor Ferrer, had been shot for heading a mutiny or rebellion in the south of France or Spain, that his last request (which had not been granted) was that he might not be blindfolded, that at the first shot he gave one groan and fell dead. And I found that the execution had taken place on the same morning and at the same hour exactly as my dream. Lastly, I saw a photograph of him lying dead and still blindfolded, and this left in my mind no doubt as to the correctness of my vision.

I may mention that I had previously no idea that there was any trouble of any kind either in France or Spain.

Of course it is not necessary to suppose any clairvoyance here, or even any telepathy from the chief actors in the tragedy. No doubt many people in England knew that Ferrer was to be shot, and at what hour, and were also acquainted with his personal appearance. The correct details about the blindfolding bandage, &c., certainly suggest direct tele-

pathy from one or other of those on the spot, but are not sufficient to establish it. There is reason to believe that a tragedy of this kind sets up a violent psychic disturbance or storm-centre, and perhaps some sort of pulsation is sent out, to be picked up and interpreted by a brain attuned to the receipt of such vibrations. It is a tempting way of explaining these things, but the analogy with wireless telegraphy is dangerous, for we do not know that "psychic waves" exist. It is merely a guess. The true mechanism may be altogether different.

The next cases are on the border-line between telepathy and clairvoyance. The account is by a London West-End surgeon. Letter dated Nov. 17, 1910.

(1) I was driving along the Bayswater Road towards the Marble Arch when I noticed an omnibus some 200 yards ahead of me, going in the same direction. I instantly knew that a very old friend, a Mrs. A—— B——, was in that omnibus. It was as though I saw her, sitting on the near-side seat; and I told my coachman to drive quickly and overtake the omnibus, as I wished to speak with someone in it. He seemed surprised that I should know that a friend was there, but drove on, and we caught up the vehicle just before it reached the Marble Arch. It had stopped, and Mrs. B—— was in the act of getting out of it as I drove up. I asked her if she had been sitting on the right hand side—and she said "No, on the left," which was just where I had pictured her in my mind.

(2) This also occurred in the Bayswater Road. I was on the top of an omnibus going town-wards almost opposite what used to be known as Notting Hill Square. On the foot-path

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I saw a lady and two small boys walking up the hill towards the shops. The omnibus had nearly overtaken them, and I thought I recognised Mrs. (now Lady) H—— I——, whom I knew fairly well. She had been present when I had met with a somewhat nasty accident, and I thought I would get off the omnibus and tell her I was quite well again. I acted on the impulse, never doubting that the lady was Mrs. I——, and that the two boys were her two sons (now well known in the theatrical world). On reaching the lady I found to my surprise that I had made a mistake, and she was *not* Mrs. I——. My road lay down Devonshire Terrace, a turning out of the main road near Notting Hill Gate Station. I had scarcely turned the corner into this road when I came face to face with Mrs. I—— and her two sons! I had not been thinking about her in any way, and this part of London was far from her own home.

Of course this may have been simply a coincidence.

(3) One evening I was sitting alone with my wife in my own house and heard the postman's knock at the front door. I at once exclaimed "That's a letter from Charlie Brown" [pseudonym]—and ran out to get it. I seemed to see the hand-writing on the envelope and to recognise it as his. Mr. Brown was not a very frequent correspondent—he is a busy man, a surgeon in Plymouth—and I had not been expecting to hear from him. The letter was from him, much to my wife's astonishment, but not at all to mine—because I felt absolutely convinced it was from him.

The next is a fairly good case from a West-End lady.

I was travelling in Norway, with friends, and we were on the way from Bergen to Stavanger. Miss Gray [pseudonym] and I were in two carioles with a driver each: the others were walking. Suddenly, when at a great height, I heard a bell toll. I turned to my friend and asked her if she heard it, and she said No, it must be a sheep-bell. As there were no animals about, that was clearly impossible, but, knowing

my friend was rather nervously inclined, I said no more, as it makes some people uncomfortable, especially when they are shortly going a sea journey.

The bell continued to tell, and presently I saw a coffin carried in front of me, followed by three people whom I recognised as friends of mine. I knew they were following the coffin of their mother, Lady B—.

Directly I arrived home I made inquiries as to whether anything had happened to this lady, and was told No, until I went to see a friend who was staying at Dover, where Lady B— had also been staying, and I said, "Has anything happened to Lady B— ? Has she been ill ?" My friend said, "No, but she has been very odd : she came to me one day saying, 'I have come to say good-bye, as I have not twenty-four hours to live,' and I believe she went to other friends, saying the same thing."

As a matter of fact, Lady B— did not die for some months, but it is curious that her (mistaken) premonition of death coincided with my vision. It happened that she had a great affection for me, as a friend of her daughters.

I have had only one other experience of the kind : one which may be either spiritistically or telepathically explained.

I have seen an account of this latter experience, but it hardly suggests anything beyond subjective activity, and is not strongly evidential of anything supernormal. As to the Norway incident described, it seems probably telepathic, but it is unfortunate that the percipient did not write out her account and get it witnessed, before inquiring about its truth. Prophecies after the event are not evidential unless it can be proved by independent testimony that the intimation was received before ; and veridical visions are not satisfactorily evidential

unless they are described in writing, and the account witnessed, before verification. Nevertheless, I am persuaded of the perfect honesty of this narrator, and am inclined to accept the accuracy of her memory also : consequently, the incident strikes me as quite probably a genuine instance of supernormal communication between mind and mind, though the documentary evidence is insufficient to prove it beyond question.

The following is from a near relative of one of our most famous scientific men, himself a member and vice-president of the Society for Psychical Research.

I was lying down asleep in the afternoon, when I was suddenly awakened by the clapping of hands and my daughter's voice calling "Hector! Hector!" in a sharp and decided manner. I was quite alone in the house, so it could not have been anyone near me. I at once put down date and time, and thought I would ask her what she was doing at that time. So the next time I went to see her (she lives forty-five miles from here) I asked her about it, and she thought for a while, and then said that on the day mentioned, and about the time stated, she had gone on the verandah and clapped her hands sharply, calling out "Hector! Hector!" to stop him making a noise on the lawn, as the clergyman and his wife were in the drawing-room, and the noise of his playing about with his companions was distracting.

Another time I was asleep in bed when I woke hearing another daughter of mine calling out most distinctly, "I'm lost, I'm lost!" As she was ten miles away at the time, I began to think but not to worry, for the tone in which she spoke was free from fear. So I looked at the time, and when she came home I asked her what she had been doing, &c., but did not mention my experience. In the course of conversation

she said, "After the dance the other night we got lost ; the lights were out and we could not find our way ; it was fun stumbling along, and I called out, 'We're lost, we're lost !'" The time was the same as I had made a note of.

I am not a member of any association, and do not make a study of anything of the kind, so my imagination was not played upon in any way.

The following accounts are from a well-known writer, a doctor's wife, who has a scientific and careful mind, and was until she was forty an agnostic.

My husband was one day spinning coins and guessing heads or tails, when I suddenly felt that I knew which it would be, and guessed correctly several times. This did not make much impression on his sceptical mind, but after that I found that when cards had been dealt round, *no one having seen them*, I could correctly say where some card was—I mean in which heap. I could do this sometimes once during an evening's play, sometimes twice. I seemed to see the card in my mind. You see there is no telepathy there—it is more a sort of mental x-ray business.

But I can't do it to order. I notice that I do it best when pleased or exhilarated with pleasant anticipations. On the other hand, the least self-consciousness or disturbance, or the presence of many people, seems to disturb the delicate equilibrium necessary. There are many other curious things about the cards. I often know, when I take up a hand, what to declare, without looking at the cards, and if I obey I win. If I doubt and disobey, the indication often comes no more that evening. This occurs so often that my husband, in spite of his scepticism, admits that he cannot play against me "*and the devil.*" It leads me to think that there is more in the success of gamblers than is generally thought.

To go on to real telepathy. May not it be a physical matter, for which the scientists have not yet found the medium ?

something finer than ether? I am loth to think it is not a commonplace and natural phenomenon, and that (as you say) just as the telegraph is used by business folk without being understood, so this will presently have a simple and natural explanation. Here is an example of my own experiences—quite useless, I am afraid, as the people concerned would, as you will perceive, object to having their names given.

I was on my way about three years ago to lunch with my friend A., and stopped to speak to B.

B. (in course of conversation). "Have you heard of poor C.?"

[C. was A.'s brother. I had not heard from A. for months except the post-card asking me to luncheon, and C. was one of the younger members of a large family. I had not met him, and knew nothing about him.]

B. "Poor chap's had a nervous breakdown."

Self (*dreamily*). "Oh no, not a nervous breakdown. It's a case of drugs and drink."

B. (*amazed*). "What an uncharitable thing for you to say!"

Self (*waking up and rather surprised at myself*). "Yes, especially when I don't know him."

I then changed the subject. When I got to my friend A.'s, I found her in great trouble about C. She told me all the details, which were as I had said.

The correct guessing of the cards is a particularly interesting phase, for—as the writer says—it seems to exclude telepathy, and therefore to call for a truly "clairvoyant" explanation. It is difficult, however, to exclude chance coincidence in such cases.

The next three cases appeared in the *Occult Review* for July 1912. I have to thank the editor for permission to republish.

I awoke about three o'clock one morning in great fear.

Waking my husband I said—in half undertones—“Do you see that girl kneeling beside the bed ? ” (He couldn’t, and laughed at me.) She appeared to be praying, as I watched her lips moving, and her head was raised, looking upwards. I said : “ It is S——” (my cousin). My husband laughed, as he and my cousin are anything but good friends ; and he turned up the gas and I suppose I was now fully awake. We talked the matter over, then thought no more about it, until a week later my brother (who had just returned from a sea voyage) called and said : “ Have you heard how Aunt B——is ? ” I replied that I did not know she was ill. “ Oh,” he said, “ she has been very seriously ill ; in fact, here is a letter from S——” (the girl I saw by my bed), “ in which she says, ‘ Mother has got over the crisis ; it was on Wednesday night. I spent most of the night by her bedside in prayer for her recovery, and about 3 A.M. she sank into a peaceful sleep and is now progressing favourably.’ ”

Wednesday night had been the night of my dream—if dream it was. I repeat that I had no idea my aunt was ill.

The next is an account given me by an old friend of mine. I wrote it down immediately, and am sure that I have got it correctly as related, but the occurrence is some years old, and therefore there are possibilities of memory-lapse in matters of detail. Still, I have not much doubt about its accuracy in essentials. The deep impression made on my friend’s mind—an impression so clear and strong that it persists in great intensity—convinces me that the experience must have been quite as remarkable as the account indicates.

Ten years ago I was attending a young man who was dying of consumption at an outlying farm. One day, on my way

thither, but quite five minutes before I came in sight of the house, I had a sudden mind's-eye vision. I saw the room, the young man lying on the bed, dead ; his mother, weeping, his father, and a brother ; also Miss Grant [a Church district-visitor known to me.—J.A.H.] reading from the Bible. When I reached the farm, I was taken to the bedroom. Everything was as I had seen it in the vision. Each person was exactly in the position, attitude, and occupation as seen. It gave me a shock which I remember vividly.

Of course I knew the young man would die before long, and it was natural to expect to see his father, mother, and brother in the room : but I had never seen Miss Grant in the house before, did not expect to see her, and was not thinking about her. And the fact of their positions, &c., being exactly as seen in the vision, was very striking to me.

The place where this happened is near my own home, and I know the farm. I can certify that from the point where my friend says he had the vision, the farm, is not visible, nor would it have been visible from any point on his journey. Consequently he had had no chance of seeing and subconsciously noting drawn blinds, if indeed they had been drawn, which is improbable, for the young man had only just died when he arrived. And, anyhow, drawn blinds would not have told him who was present, and how occupied. Did the spirit of the young man—dying or dead, thus just becoming superior to spatial limitations—flash on my friend's mind a kind of magic-lantern picture of the state of affairs, in order to inform him ? It looks rather like it, though of course it is perhaps almost equally reasonable to suppose the telepathic agent to be one

of the survivors. Not *quite* equally reasonable, though ; for there is evidence of various kinds which suggests that the departing or just-departed spirit has greater power of manifestation than the spirits of those who are still firmly cabined in the flesh.

It is worth mentioning that it was a cold winter's day, and my friend was walking briskly along, thinking of nothing in particular, and probably in a mental state very favourable to recipience of a supernormal message. The road is quiet, the landscape pleasant, very few houses in sight. Probably he was looking over the fields and enjoying the fresh air and the walk. It is the only experience of a psychical kind that he has ever had. He is not a spiritualist—in fact he disbelieves all “that sort of thing.” He has no explanation to offer concerning his vision, and merely says it was “queer.” It is curious and amusing, when one is collecting these cases, to note how resolutely each experient dismisses other folk's experience as hallucinatory and quite unimportant, while sticking to his own bit as being true and to be treated seriously. As Mr. De Morgan says in *Somehow Good* (about Colonel Lund's perception of the deceased Major Roper—a perception which Mrs. Fenwick stuck to as queer, in spite of her husband's scoffs), this “isn't researching fair”; for the other fellow's yarn is probably as trustworthy as ours. But it certainly is human nature. And on the whole it is well that it is so.

A little excess of incredulity is better than extremes in the other direction.

The following case is from the wife of a rector in one of our agricultural counties :

My husband and I were driving one dark night (no moon) about 7.30 p.m. to our workhouse to give an address. The pony we drove was so absolutely quiet that no lights or motors or noises, &c., ever frightened it, and it was this fact that made the incident so odd.

As we were nearing the end of a long, lonely lane, we saw in front of us, a few yards from where three lanes crossed, curious large patches of light on the road, somewhat as if some luminous salt had been spilt there. We both exclaimed at the sight, and our pony behaved as I have never seen him before or since : he stood still, then backed, snorting with terror. We had to get out and lead him, and we had much difficulty in doing that. We examined the ground (and went again next day) but could find nothing to account for it. When we reached the workhouse my husband laughingly told the old people we had seen a ghost ! A few days after, one old woman inmate asked to speak to him, and inquired whether what we had seen was in a certain spot between a barn and the Aytoun-Drews' house. We told her Yes, and she said that once some man had been killed there, and that her father's horses constantly used to shy at this place.

There is good reason to believe that where a tragedy has occurred, or perhaps any incident involving violent emotions, an imprint is left on that portion of space or the matter occupying it—an imprint, or a vibratory quality, which can affect certain sensitive individuals in such a way that they

see or hear something abnormal, from mere indications such as lights, up to a complete reproduction of all the details of the catastrophe. But this is a part of the subject which is still almost unexplored, and we require much more data than we yet possess before we can profitably begin inventing hypotheses.

## CHAPTER VII.

### VERIDICAL APPARITIONS.<sup>9</sup>

AN important part of the S.P.R.'s work has been—and is—the collection of cases of apparitions and the like. In vol. x. of its *Proceedings* there is a large armoury of such cases, carefully reported, classified, and estimated. Many of them indicate telepathy or clairvoyance, but the most interesting are those which suggest survival of death. The following may be quoted as examples. I condense the accounts, for the sake of brevity ;<sup>n</sup>the S.P.R. of course requires full particulars, and corroborating letters from other people, as far as possible, and this makes the cases tedious to read *in extenso*.

Mr. Walker-Anderson, living in Australia, woke up between nine and twelve o'clock, and saw the figure of his aunt, Mrs. P—, standing near the foot of the bed at one side, dressed in an ordinary black dress such as he had seen her in many times. She looked older and stouter than when he last saw her three years before. She seemed to speak, and

he thought her lips formed the word "good-bye." The figure then gradually vanished. There was a lamp in the room. He was sure he was fully awake. The aunt was not in a state of health to cause any anxiety. He told his wife in the morning, saying he was sure his aunt P—— was dead. In due time letters arrived, with news of her death in England at 11 A.M. of the day on which the apparition was seen. Allowing for difference of longitude, it seems that the apparition was seen about two hours after the death.\*

The Rev. Matthew Frost, sitting at tea in his house in Essex, and talking with his wife, heard a rap at the window, and, looking round, saw his grandmother, in her usual bonnet and cape, and with one hand raised as if she had just tapped at the window. He thought she had come without intimation, to give them a pleasant surprise. She lived in Yorkshire, over 200 miles away, but was an active old lady, quite equal to the journey, and fond of her joke. Mr. Frost went out and round the house, but could find nobody. It was 5 P.M. on an April afternoon, and quite daylight. Mrs. Frost saw nothing. It turned out that the grandmother had died in Yorkshire about half-past four in that day. Mr. and Mrs. Frost had not been talking about her, and did not know she was ill, so they were not expecting her death. Mr. Frost had never had

\* *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. x., p. 211.

any previous experience of the kind, and would have ridiculed the subject five minutes before. Professor Sidgwick visited the house, heard the story, and obtained Mrs. Frost's confirmation. Mr. Frost had not seen his grandmother for over two years. At their last meeting, she had asked him to come to her if she were ill, or at least to her funeral, and he had remarked—though without real belief—“They tell me that when people die they can make it known to those they love. If you die and are happy will you let me know it?” She promised that she would if she could.\*

Baron von Driessen sends a particularly interesting account. Just after putting out the candle at night, he heard footsteps in the next room—a sound of slippers shuffling. He called out, “Who is there?” No answer. He struck a match, then another, and saw his father-in-law, M. Ponomareff, who had died nine days previously, and with whom he had not been on good terms. The figure was standing up, in his blue dressing-gown, lined with squirrel furs and only half-buttoned, showing his white waist-coat and black trousers. Baron von Driessen asked, “What do you want?” M. Ponomareff made two steps forward, stopped before Von Driessen’s bed, and said: “Basil Feodorovitch, I have acted wrongly towards you. Forgive me! Without this I do not feel at rest there.” He pointed to the

\* *Op. cit.*, p. 225.

ceiling with his left hand, while holding out his right. The Baron shook the hand, which was long and cold, and said : " Nicholas Ivanovitch, God is my witness that I have never had anything against you." The figure bowed, and disappeared.

Next day a liturgy was celebrated, the officiating priest being the family confessor, Father Basil Bajenoff. After the service, Father Basil wished to speak to Baron von Driessen in private. He said, solemnly : " This night at three o'clock Nicholas Ivanovitch Ponomareff appeared to me and begged of me to reconcile him to you."

The S.P.R. obtained the independent and corroborating account of Father Basil.\*

Captain Colt, home for holidays, awoke suddenly one night and saw, surrounded by a sort of phosphorescent mist, the form of his brother (who was in the Crimea) kneeling. He was not afraid, having been brought up to disbelieve in ghosts and the like, and thought it must be an illusion—moonlight on a towel, or something. But there was no moon, and it was raining hard : the figure remained there, unmistakably his brother. Captain Colt got up, walked through the apparition, turned round, and still saw it, looking anxiously and lovingly at him. He then for the first time noticed a wound on the figure's right temple, and a red stream from it. Captain Colt was upset, and went out of the room,

\* *Op. cit.*, p. 385.

spending the remainder of the night on a sofa in another room.

In due time came information about the storming of the Redan. Captain Colt's brother took part, and was killed in the assault. His body was found in a kneeling position, propped up by other bodies. There was a bullet wound in the right temple.

The brothers had made an arrangement that, if possible, Captain Colt should be spiritually informed in case of anything happening to the other.\*

These cases, however fully established as to their details, of course do not amount to proof of spirit-agency. There are various other alternative hypotheses.

The apparition of Mr. Walker-Anderson's aunt may have been telepathically communicated, unconsciously or subconsciously, by some surviving relative. There is experimental proof that under certain conditions a phantasm can be generated—or a person made to see one—by an act of will. Myers describes a case † in which Mr. S. H. B., who happens to be the brother of a friend of mine, caused an apparition of himself to be seen in a room three miles away, by someone who knew nothing of what he was doing, and who therefore was not in a state of expectancy. And if this can sometimes be done by a conscious effort of will, perhaps it can also be

\* Myers' *Human Personality*, vol. ii., p. 348.

† *Ibid.*, vol. i., pp. 293, 688.

done by the subliminal self—the strata of mind which lie below the level of the threshold of consciousness. This is not as outrageous as it sounds. There is reason to believe that in many psychic happenings it is the subliminal that is operative. For instance, apparitions are often seen of a person who is unconscious, either in sleep or in trance due to anæsthetics or accident; and this seems to suggest subliminal activity. A phantasm of a dead person, therefore, is not necessarily produced by that person's surviving mind. It may have been produced unconsciously by someone who is still alive.

The same thing applies to the experience of Mr. Frost, and—less probably—to that of Captain Colt. In these cases, the fact of a sort of compact having been made is at least somewhat of a strengthener to the idea that the cause of the phenomenon is the dying or dead person who made the compact. But here again there is a difficulty in regarding the phenomenon as *proof* of survival, for it may be that the phantasm is the effect of a telepathic impact sent out before the decedent's death, which impact did not emerge into consciousness at once, owing to distance or to the percipient's mind not being passive enough to allow free way to the message. And of course there is always the possibility of chance coincidence. Many people have hallucinations which are not veridical (truth-telling); *i.e.* they convey no information, and are probably as subjective as mere dreams. But it must be admitted

that where the hallucination is veridical and gives considerable detail, as in Captain Colt's case, and when the percipient has never had any such experience before—is not subject to hallucinations and is in perfect health—it hardly seems scientific to dismiss the whole thing as chance coincidence. It seems much more like cause and effect, though of course we cannot trace the process. We do not know how a dead person can produce an apparition of himself. But neither do we know how a living one does it, though Mr. S. H. B. did it. We must not deny the reality of a fact, or of a connection between two facts, merely on the strength of our inability to "understand" it. The understanding of it may come later.

And it is noteworthy that the Committee of the S.P.R. which carried out the laborious investigations of which the results are tabulated in *Proceedings*, vol. x., came to a favourable though cautiously-expressed conclusion. They received 17,000 answers to their list of questions, and they applied careful mathematical methods to the statistics obtained. Their last word was this: "*Between deaths and apparitions of the dying person a connection exists which is not due to chance alone.* This we hold as a proved fact. The discussion of its full implications cannot be attempted in this paper;—nor, perhaps, exhausted in this age." \*

This was signed by Professor and Mrs. Sidgwick,

\* *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. x., p. 394.

Miss Alice Johnson, F. W. H. Myers, and Frank Podmore. With the possible exception of Myers, the Committee was composed of the most sceptical among the researchers. It is rather noteworthy that the evidence impressed them so much. The investigation involved three years of work. And William James has left it on record that in his opinion Dr. Sidgwick was "the most exasperatingly critical mind in England."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE SUBLIMINAL SELF.

"We feel that we are greater than we know," said Wordsworth. Modern psychology confirms the intuition of the poet. Various lines of evidence converge to prove that ourselves as we know them are not all there is of us. The mind is like a spectrum-band, which has an extension in the infra-red and the ultra-violet; the seen part is only a small portion of the whole. Or like an iceberg, which floats with only one-tenth of its bulk above water. This discovery was made, or at least put into scientific shape, by F. W. H. Myers about 1886. The late William James—the greatest psychologist of the nineteenth century—regarded it as the most important modern advance in his department of science.

But if—it may be asked—there is something mental or psychical in us beyond the bounds of our own minds or souls as we know them in self-consciousness, how are we to unearth and examine this something? How are we even to become aware of it? The answer cites various classes of fact, and inferences drawn from those facts.

(1) *Subliminal Sensation*.—One small fly walking over the back of my hand arouses no sensation. It is not felt. But if there were six flies instead of one, I should feel them. Thus six times nothing produces something, which, as Euclid would say, is absurd. Or, to put it the other way round, a sensation is produced by a given stimulus, but when the latter is diminished by five-sixths, the remaining sensation is not one-sixth of the original sensation, but is on the contrary *nil*. In other words, there is a “threshold”; below this threshold of intensity a stimulus produces no conscious sensation. But we suppose that it produces a subconscious or subliminal one.\* Something in us perceives the stimulus given by the one fly, even though the normal mind does not. This is borne out by various experiments in hypnosis, whereby the subliminal can be put on tap, part of the ordinary consciousness being temporarily submerged. A finger can be made anæsthetic, then pricked, the patient not being allowed to see: he feels nothing, but if he can write automatically, his hand will tell how many times the finger was pricked, just as if the finger or hand had a piece of mind off to itself, separated from the main mass. Similarly with hysterical patients, whose field of vision is usually narrowed; they see nothing consciously outside a small circle in the visual field, but if you put a mouse outside that circle but within the normal field, the patient

\* *Sub*, below: *limen*, a threshold.

is frightened though without knowing why. In other words, she perceives the mouse subliminally. Also with regard to the many complex chemical and other reactions in the human body, in digestion and the like—reactions which would tax the intelligence of a Crookes to perform—it seems impossible to avoid the inference that there must be sensation, though unperceived by the “consciousness.” In short, there are sensations which we do not become aware of, as there are rays of light which we do not see.

(2) *Subliminal Intellection*.—For this the evidence is ample. There is no room for doubt that something in us thinks, reasons, calculates, counts, without the normal consciousness knowing anything about it. The most striking experiments on this point are those of Dr. J. Milne Bramwell, who ordered hypnotised patients to perform some trivial but unusual action after their arousal from the trance, as, for example, to make a cross on a piece of paper at the end of a specified period of time, reckoning from the moment of waking. In the normal waking state the patient knew nothing of the order; but a subliminal mental stratum knew, and watched the time, making the patient carry out the order when it fell due. The period varied from a few minutes to several months. Dr. Bramwell would say to the hypnotised patient: “ You will feel impelled to make a cross on a piece of paper, and will do so, putting down the time also. This is to take place

at the expiration of 24 hours and 2880 minutes." This is one of the actual cases. The order was given at 3.45 P.M. on Saturday, December 18, and it was carried out correctly at 3.45 P.M. on December 21. In other experiments the periods given were 4417, 8650, 8680, 8700, 10,070, 11,470 minutes. All were carried out correctly. In the waking state the patient was quite incapable of calculating mentally when these times would elapse. But the hypnotic stratum could do it, and could ensure that the order should be carried out at the exact moment of falling due. In one instance the time happened to expire during the night. The patient made the cross on paper at her bedside, at the correct time, apparently without waking—for she had no recollection of having done it.\*

We may say, then, that not only is there some subliminal part of our minds that can calculate, but also that this something can calculate better than the ordinary waking consciousness.

The same conclusion is arrived at by the consideration of such performances as those of "arithmetical prodigies." It is found that these curiously endowed people can solve in a few seconds—and sometimes almost instantaneously—problems which would utterly baffle most ordinary people, and which would take an average arithmetician a quarter of an hour's rapid work with pencil and paper. Yet

\* *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xii., p. 187; vol. xxi., p. 14; and Bramwell's *Hypnotism*, p. 125.

these prodigies—who are sometimes of very low mental power so far as their normal consciousness is concerned, e.g., Dase, Buxton, Mondeux—are entirely unable to tell how they do it. They do not consciously work the sum out. They let it sink into their minds, and then wait for the answer to be shot up. It is like putting the plum-pudding into the geyser to be cooked. Or like putting the pig into the Chicago machine. It goes in pig, and comes out sausages. The intermediate processes are hidden from us. The calculation is made subliminally—below the threshold of ordinary consciousness.\*

(3) *Subliminal Memory*.—The results of hypnotic experiment and of the study of pathological cases of split personality such as Dr. Morton Prince's Miss Beauchamp, are sufficient to prove that the subliminal memory is more extensive than the normal one. Many things which we "forget" seem to slip down below the threshold, thus becoming lost to ordinary consciousness but remaining accessible by hypnotic methods. Or it sometimes happens that they are recovered in sleep, when the conscious self is in abeyance, and another stratum of the mind has come to the top. Or they turn up in automatic writing with planchette or a pencil. In a striking case recently reported to the Society for Psychical Research, an automatic writer had communications from a "spirit" who called herself Blanche Poynings

\* Gautama Buddha seems to have been a calculating boy, according to Sir E. Arnold's *Light of Asia*, book i.

and gave a great deal of historical detail which the automatist did not consciously know. But it was afterwards found that Blanche Poynings was a character in a novel which had been read to the automatist many years before; and the novel contained all the historical detail given. All this had been "forgotten." It had slipped down below the threshold. But the subliminal strata still retained it, and could produce it (in the usual mystifying spirit-style) when tapped by a bore-hole sunk—so to speak—through the upper levels of normal consciousness, by means of automatic writing.\*

(4) *Subliminal Emotion*.—This is a reality also, though perhaps less provable. An interesting example of the kind of evidence required occurred in Mrs. Verrall's experience with automatic writing some time ago. Without experiencing conscious emotion, she found the tears running down her face. The script, on examination, was found to contain references to the tragic death of two of Mrs. Verrall's friends. The automatist was quite unaware of the contents of the script until she read it. But evidently some part of the mind was not only thinking and remembering and making the fingers write without conscious direction, but was also feeling and suffering, and making the lachrymal glands secrete excessively without the conscious mind knowing why.

\* *Journal S.P.R.*, vol. xli., p. 287, and *Proceedings*, vol. xxv., p. 455.

(5) *Subliminal Creation and Will*.—This is the best proved of all, for most of us prove it for ourselves every night. In dreams, every one of us becomes novelist or dramatist, inventing situations—usually absurd to the waking mind—which are absolutely novel in our experience. And, to step at once to the higher plane, we may say that all works of genius, all creations, are uprushes from subliminal depths. They are not produced by taking thought. The process is felt to be quite different from that of reasoning and thinking. It is more a waiting than a working. *Alles ist als wie geschenkt*, says Goethe. It is as if given, sent, bestowed. Many great writers bear out Goethe's dictum. Ibsen wrote *Brand* in three weeks, in a state of feverish exaltation ; scrambling out of bed to write down, half-asleep, the lines which rose tumultuously to the surface of his mind. Charlotte Brontë could write freely on some days, while at other times, the story hung fire for weeks at a time, refusing to unroll itself ; then a volcanic burst, and she would write furiously until she was ill with the strain. In her preface to Emily's *Wuthering Heights*, discussing the permissibility of creating such characters as Heathcliff, she states the case in language unsurpassed as well for psychological accuracy as for literary power and charm :

" But this I know ; the writer who possesses the creative gift owns something of which he is not always master—something that, at times, strangely wills and works for itself. He may lay down rules and devise principles, and to rules

and principles it will perhaps for years lie in subjection ; and, then, haply without any warning of revolt, there comes a time when it will no longer consent to ‘ harrow the valleys, or be bound with a band in the furrow’—when it ‘ laughs at the multitude of the city, and regards not the crying of the driver’—when, refusing absolutely to make ropes out of sea-sand any longer, it sets to work on statue-hewing, and you have a Pluto or a Jove, a Tisiphone or a Psyche, a Mermaid or a Madonna, as Fate or Inspiration direct. Be the work grim or glorious, dread or divine, you have little choice left but quiescent adoption. As for you—the nominal artist—your share in it has been to work passively under dictates you neither delivered nor could question—that would not be uttered at your prayer, nor suppressed nor changed at your caprice. If the result be attractive, the World will praise you, who little deserve praise ; if it be repulsive, the same World will blame you, who almost as little deserve blame.”

This would be endorsed by Scott, who dictated *The Bride of Lammermoor* while ill and in an abnormal mental state, being under the influence of opium administered to numb the pain of biliary colic. When he read the story in book form, he found a great part of it quite new to him. Unconscious or subconscious creation was a marked feature of R. L. Stevenson also. He tells us that he wrote fifteen chapters of *Treasure Island* in fifteen days, then stuck completely ; “ My mouth was empty ; there was not one word of *Treasure Island* in my bosom.” But again the tide rose ; “ and behold ! it flowed from me like small talk.” And he finished it at the rate of a chapter a day.\* As already remarked, Stevenson used to dream most of his plots.

\* *Essays in the Art of Writing*, pp. 124, 125.

He describes the process in his book *Across the Plains*. There is evidently a close connection between the phenomena of dreams and the inspirations of genius.

Similar statements of experience can be found in other departments of creative art. Perhaps it is even more marked in music than in literature. Mozart had a vivid sense of the extraneous nature of the afflatus—extraneous, that is, to the conscious mind. “All the finding and making only goes on in me as in a very vivid dream. . . . Whence and how—that I do not know and cannot learn.”\* Watteau, even—not a very lofty soul—was puzzled by the “queer trick” he possessed, and could not tell how he did it. The creative artist never *can* tell; if he could, he could teach others to do it. Something different from his everyday conscious mind wills and works within him; something which that conscious mind cannot see or get hold of. William Sharp called it “the mind behind the mind”; and when he had his own inspirations from this background, “he would write at great speed, hardly aware of what or how he wrote . . .” as Mrs. Sharp tells us in the *Memoir* (p. 109). Dante, Russell Lowell, Friedrich Nietzsche, O. W. Holmes, and hosts of others testify to the inspirational fact. What they produce is given to them; they do not consciously make it. Holmes, who was a doctor and psychologist as well as a creator in a small way, has some good remarks on the subject, closely paralleling Charlotte Brontë,

\* Hartmann’s *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, vol. i., p. 279.

in his *Mechanism, in Thought and Morals*, p. 57, but the passage is too long to quote here.

It is established, then, that there can be mental or psychic activity of many kinds, sensational, intellectual, reminiscent, emotional, volitional, creative, over and above anything that the conscious mind is aware of. Science has proved that we are greater than we know. And this fact, bringing such a greatly enlarged conception of our own "nature, obviously makes it more difficult to be sure that any given phenomenon is outside the range of our own minds. In their subliminal levels they may have all sorts of faculties and powers, telepathic, clairvoyant, and what not. In short, the doctrine of the "subliminal" destroys the possibility of *proof* of human individual survival. The evidence may strongly suggest this latter, but the alternative hypothesis is always available for those who prefer it. And I am glad that it is so. I like to think that perhaps our subliminals merge into one, and that we are really all connected, as the leaves belong to the tree. As James has said, "A sort of *anima mundi* thinking in all of us seems a more likely hypothesis than that of a lot of individual souls." But I admit that there are difficulties ; and anyhow the question remains open, and each one may take his choice of the two rival theories.

## CHAPTER IX.

### CONCLUSION.

IT is probable that no single theory will cover the whole range of psychical phenomena. At present, many heterogeneous phenomena are lumped together under the heading "psychical," mainly because they are equally incomprehensible and outside the pale of orthodox science. But it will probably happen, as we learn more, that different explanations will be needed for different phenomena. Movement of objects without discoverable cause, for example, is hardly explained by referring it to spirits. Perhaps we shall eventually be able to link it up with physics by the establishment of a sort of magnetic effluent such as Mesmer believed in, emitted by peculiarly endowed people like Eusapia Palladino. This kind of thing, even if it does really happen (waltzing stools, tables, &c.), has no particular bearing on survival; though it must be admitted that mediums who produce physical phenomena often produce evidence of the identity kind also, as with D. D. Home; and this complicates matters. But as the

really supernormal character of alleged physical phenomena is not yet established, the explanation may be deferred.

As to apparitions and the like, the evidence is strong. The chief difficulty is telepathic. It is believed by most of the leading investigators, partly on experimental evidence and partly on other grounds, that transmission of thought by channels other than the sensory ones does in fact sometimes take place.\* Add to this a hallucinatory figure, and the trick is done. But I am not sure that it is a legitimate trick. I think that some apparitions strongly suggest the agency of the dead; and if we could get over our materialistic prejudices I believe we should in some cases frankly adopt that hypothesis.

In the phenomena of automatic writing the explanation-possibilities are similarly complicated. Some cases may be purely subliminal mystifications of the dream-type—the automatist's hand and pencil dreaming on paper, so to speak. Others may involve some telepathy. Others may be genuine communications from "the other side." It is impossible to draw hard-and-fast lines. But I do at least deprecate the "evil-spirit theory." In the first place, the devil-theory is not provable. There may be many non-human spiritual beings existent in the universe, but any *proof* of their existence seems impossible.

\* Sir Oliver Lodge, in *The Survival of Man*, p. 38 and foll., describes his own striking experiments.

Further, the acceptance of a "devil-theory" may bring various kinds of superstition and inhumanity, such as witchcraft and persecution. And we must remember that it is based entirely on the statements of the entities themselves. On the other hand, we know for certain that the human mind in its ordinary embodied state does at times indulge in strange romancings. In his nightly dreams many an honest gentleman becomes a very scurvy rascal, thieving or deceiving without the least sense of shame. I myself — I regret to say — have committed several entirely unprovoked and quite unpardonable murders in the dream-world, and on two or three occasions have reached the edge of what journalists call the "dread penalty," for the bolt was just going to be drawn when I awoke. Yet in my waking state I am the most inoffensive of men. I have no intention of murdering anybody; and I regard my subliminal's dream-performances with the most unqualified detestation.

Remember also the effects of anaesthetics. It is common enough for respectable and modest girls, when under chloroform for operations, to use profane and obscene language, which even to hear, in their normal state, would be most distressing. Here again the subliminal self, or part of it, must be held responsible. It would not be scientific to assume evil spirits to account for either our dreams or for the profane delirium of drug anaesthesia; and it is equally unnecessary in the case of waking autom-

atisms. The subliminal, as Myers said, is part rubbish-heap and part king's-treasury. It seems to be concerned in supernormal phenomena of psychical-research kind, and with the inspirations of genius ; but it has its degenerations and lunacies. And in this, of course, it only resembles human nature in general. When this dream stratum of the mind is active in sleep, we dream—more or less foolishly. When we are awake, the full blaze of the normal consciousness obliterates subliminal activity, as the moon is invisible in the day-time sky ; but some people can "put the subliminal on tap"—as Professor James once said—more or less at will, by letting it have a hand to write with. And if this is the correct theory, dream-like extravaganzas are what we should expect. Sometimes they become curious and impressive by the vigour of their dramatic presentation, or by bringing in queer scraps of "forgotten" knowledge, as in the quoted case where a control turned out to be a character in a novel which had been read and forgotten.

It is possible, of course, that the alternative theory of tricky human spirits—practical jokers on "the other side"—may in some cases be the true explanation. As I have said elsewhere, I believe that the evidence now accumulated is sufficient to justify a belief in the occasional possibility of genuine communications ; and if so, there seems no reason to deny that there may be practical jokers, and even malicious persons, over there as well as here. But

before accepting this in any given case, we must have evidence of identity. An angel cannot prove to us that he is an angel, but John Smith can prove (or at least establish a probability) that he is John Smith, by telling us something about his life which the medium could not have known, and which can be verified by inquiry. If he will not do this, he must not complain when we treat him as a pseudo-entity—a subliminal fiction. I think this is what we ought to do, in the absence of evidence for an external mind. After the lamentable tragedy of the *Titanic*, “spirit-messages” from W. T. Stead came pouring through various mediums. This kind of thing always happens when a prominent spiritualist or psychic researcher dies. It is to be expected, on either theory. If spiritualism is true, it is pretty certain that a departed spiritualist will try to communicate. If it is not, it still remains that the expectancy of believers will tend to the production of subliminally-concocted messages. In the Stead communications, so far as I am aware, there was little or no evidence of his identity. They were mostly commonplace and general. When detailed and precise, they were usually either demonstrably false—as when, in some private scripts which I have seen, reference is made to conversations (with still living people) which on inquiry are found never to have taken place—or they were contradicted through another medium. In one set of messages he described his sensations of drowning; in another he said he did not consciously drown,

having been stunned by something striking him on the head. In face of this non-evidentiality and contradiction, it would be extremely unwise to attach importance to the "communications."

I am inclined to think that there is some sort of psychological connection between the frequent grandiose claim of lofty origin, and the similar claim made as to personality by many of those who believe in reincarnation. Occasionally these two classes of phenomena are useful by negating each other, in a more or less amusing way. For example, among the controls of a medium (non-professional) whose product of automatic script, &c., I have carefully examined, there figures a solemn entity—much oppressed by a sense of his own importance—who says he is St. Peter. Now obviously we cannot disprove this, for there are no details of St. Peter's life extant, except such as are accessible to everyone. But it so happens that a theosophical correspondent of mine, unaware of the communications just mentioned, and doubtless informed by some adept or by the Akashic Records, claims with the most absolute assurance to be herself a reincarnation of the said Saint, while the other apostles are dealt out among her friends and relations. Evidently there is *something* wrong. If St. Peter is here again in the flesh—in the Lake District, as it happens—he cannot very well be communicating from the spirit world through a medium in Australia. So I leave the one to balance the other, and take neither of them seriously.

At least, I do not take them seriously as regards their face value. They are, however, to be regarded seriously enough as morbid mental symptoms. Insanity often takes the form of delusions as to identity, the patient imagining himself or some friend (or even attendant) to be Almighty God or other great Being. The reincarnationist who becomes obsessed even as to the normal consciousness with the idea that he or she is St. Peter or other exalted entity, is, in my opinion, on the verge of grave mental disturbance. When the fabricating and believing stratum remains subliminal, there is less danger, for the normal consciousness may remain master, so to speak—may look on at the subliminal's claims with a certain detached and critical humour, refusing to be rushed into belief. But there is always an element of danger, particularly if the medium is surrounded by awestruck friends who feed the flame of vanity. Mr. Edward Maitland became fully convinced that he was a reincarnation of St. John, while Mrs. Kingsford had in her time played many parts, including those of Mary Magdalene and Faustina.\* And one of their planchette communicators was the Angel Gabriel. I do not wish to be “the spirit that denies,” like Mephistopheles, nor do I wish to incur any charge of flippancy or irreverence; but I must say that this kind of thing is dangerous. That way madness lies.

\* Cf. *The Story of my Reincarnation*, by “Zivola” (Constable and Co.), alleged reincarnation of Jesus; and, for Mrs. Kingsford and Faustina, *The Story of Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland*, p. 95.

The foregoing quoted experiences and comments may serve as warnings to those inclined to experiment in automatic writing. Such experimentation is, for many people, unsuitable. Psychologically and philosophically the subject is of immense interest, and it is possible that great discoveries may be made in this domain ; but those who experiment therein must have steady nerves and a cool judgment. The experience of Miss Curtis was upsetting enough to have killed her. Moral : avoid automatic writing unless you are prepared and able to treat everything that comes with a critical and healthily sceptical scrutiny and judgment. I admit that these messages come in very dramatic and impressive form, and that there does seem something very diabolic in the heartless kind of deception which they so often perpetrate. But it is not necessary to invoke non-human devils in explanation. There is much of both devil and angel in the ordinary human mind ; and until we have explored the potentialities of that wondrous entity and have found and marked its frontiers, we cannot safely attribute intelligence-indicating phenomena, however queer and inexplicable, to the agency of non-human beings. *Entia non sunt multiplicanda præter necessitatem.*

But, on the whole, I doubt if any such frontier-finding and frontier-marking is or ever will be possible. We belong, as to our bodies, to a material universe with which we are—so to speak—continuous ; for our bodies are part of the earth's substance, and have

their share in the gravitational attraction which our planet exerts on every other particle of matter throughout the universe. Similarly, it is reasonable to believe that on the inner or spiritual side we are continuous with a larger Being, perhaps proximately with an Earth-Soul, and finally with a Universe-Soul or God. At this point, however, we run into the difficulties which surround the philosophical problem of the One and the Many, which is outside the scope of our present subject. We know ourselves as separate entities here, yet we believe that in God we live and move and have our being. No doubt this looks like inconsistency, acceptance of two incompatibles. If so, and if I were much concerned about consistency—which I am not—I would stick to God and give up myself. Perhaps this is what is meant by “He that loseth his life shall save it.” Certainly the Peer-Gynt selfishness and lust to “remain himself” is atheism, and the last antithesis of religion as conceived by all the great seers, from Lao-Tze to Whitman. Our separateness is an illusion. My finger and thumb are separate things, and they even press in opposing directions as I hold the pen with which I am writing: but they are unified in the higher synthesis of the hand, and their apparent separateness and opposition are needed in the furtherance of purposes which they do not themselves understand. Similarly, it is reasonable to believe that by the strivings and oppositions both within our individual spirits and within the social organism between

those spirits, some higher purpose is being achieved. What that purpose is, I do not and cannot know, nor what the Being is, whose will and purpose direct our petty activities. These matters transcend my faculties, and I will not pretend to know, when I am well aware that I do not know. But the belief is a rational one. It is based, like science, on analogy, and has room within itself for all possible scientific or other discoveries. I am not concerned to convert anybody else to it, for each is doing his own work, and indeed there are other things which matter more than philosophy ; but I know at least that it is a Faith through which salvation is attained. And when it is attained, the question of personal survival becomes unimportant. It becomes a sort of side issue, or—to change the figure—a temporary crutch until we reach the mountain-top and can see the wider vision.

From this vantage-ground, the queerest of phenomena such as we have been considering can be contemplated with equanimity. If they are facts, they have their meaning and purpose, though at present it may be outside our range. Our present business is to find out exactly what are the facts, and to link them together and fit them into the general *cadre* of science. The task is as religious as it is secular ; for Science and Philosophy are only specially laborious efforts to learn as much as may be of the mind of God.

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